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THE

TRIALS OF LIFE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "DE LISLE."

All suffering doth destroy, or is destroy'd,
Even by the sufferer; and, in each event,
Ends:—Some, with hope replenish'd and rebuoy'd,
Return to whence they came—with like intent,
And weave their web again; some, bow'd and bent,
Wax gray and ghastly, withering ere their time,
And perish with the reed on which they leant;
Some seek devotion, toil, war, good or crime,
According as their souls were form'd to sink or climb.

4th CANTO OF CHILDE HAROLD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

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ALICIA.

Within that meek, fair form, were feelings high,
That deem'd not, till they found their energy.

BYRON'S "CORSAIR."

To Mrs. * * * *.

To whom can I better dedicate my *Recollections* of Alicia, than to you, my dear Madam, who knew the fair original? Time and sorrow had indeed, before you saw her, dimmed the lustre of her matchless beauty; but even then enough remained to excite your admiration, mixed, perhaps, with the charitable regret that the powers of her mind should be so much less striking than the brilliancy of her eye. You knew neither what her situation then was, nor what it had been—how strongly she could feel, and how nobly she could act. I rejoice in vindicating, to one of your candid temper, the memory of a friend, endeared to me no less by the real excellence of her disposition, than by her successive misfortunes. I have faithfully related what I knew of her story, and heard of her sentiments.

My anxiety to avoid extraneous matter, or to lend to a mere effort of memory those embellishments which can belong properly only to a work of imagination, has often, I fear, made my narrative unconnected and desultory. To you, who know it to be *fact*, it may however still wear a semblance of interest; and in that hope I present it to you, trusting you will be disposed to read the latter part with the same indulgence with which you perused the former.

Ever, dear Madam,
Your sincere admirer,
And affectionate
Humble Servant,
The Author.

ALICIA.

CHAPTER I.

> Who doth not feel—until his failing sight
> Faints into dimness with its own delight;
> His changing cheek—his sinking heart confess
> The might—the majesty of loveliness?
>
> BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

"YOU will never get Alicia's consent; that's all I pretend to say, Captain Neville," said his submissive spouse, in a discontented accent.

"Not get Alicia's consent!" retorted the angry Captain; "why, then, Madam, I'll have her married without her consent! Will you not listen to reason, Mrs. Neville? Can you not plainly see, that if we don't make her marry Lord X——, according to our original plan, she will be taking up with some beggar of her own choosing. Don't you remember that young coxcomb she was so near running off with, before she was fifteen? Luckily, I got the dog shipped off for India, or all my hopes would have been blasted by his whining folly, and the girl's vanity!"

"Well, if she *is* vain," replied the fond mother, with a sigh, "no one has so good a right to be so; and that, you know, you tell her every day."

"Ay," said the softened Captain, "I would not spoil her beauty by fretting, if I could help it; but marry her

I must, and will! he added, his muscles again stiffening into positiveness, "and so you may tell her."

"I must beg to be excused," said Mrs. Neville, in an accent of alarm. "You know, no one can manage or understand your daughter but yourself; and I should never know what to say, if the poor girl began to cry."

"Yes, yes," muttered the Captain between his teeth, "I know of old how quickly a few tears melt the little sense you have to boast of."

"My love?" asked the lady, who had long been deaf.

Her love answered by a glance of contempt, and presently pulling the bell with violence, desired Miss Neville might be sent to him.

"Miss Neville is not in the house, Sir," answered the servant.

"Why, Mrs. Neville, how is this?" said her incensed husband; "how can you suffer your daughter to be out at this hour? these damp nights will destroy her. I never knew such folly; there is time enough in the day to walk, when people can see their way before them. I am surprised at your permitting it!"

Poor Mrs. Neville might have said she had never been suffered to have any control over her daughter's mind or actions; but, aware that her husband knew that as well as herself, she mildly answered, she would seek her.

But, in her absence, the Captain would have nobody to scold;—he therefore asked her by what magic she expected to find her daughter in the dark, when she could not guess which road she had taken; and continued to vent his ill-humour, and bestow on his w some of those gentle blessings which he was in t habit of pouring upon his men on board-ship. Luck for the lady's feelings, she was not only, as we ha before observed, extremely deaf, but she was also well accustomed to language of that nature, that s never even listened to it, but immediately began to thi of something else.

We are glad to present this trait of wisdom to our readers, because it was the only one Mrs. Neville was ever known to have been guilty of. The Captain stopped in the midst of an oath, and his wife broke off her reflections upon the work in her hand, at the same moment; for both looking towards the window, descried their lovely daughter.

Alicia Neville slowly advanced from the opposite side of the Park, her arms crossed on her breast; her head bending to the earth. She seemed rather like some fairy form floating in the clear moonshine, than an animated being. Her father forgot his anger as he gazed upon her, and her mother's eyes filled with tears of admiration and delight. Alicia paused, and leaned against the pedestal of a figure of Hercules, not from fatigue of body, but lassitude of mind. She felt weary, but she knew not of what; she endeavoured to give additional interest to the favourite scene before her, by the recollection of other times and feelings. In vain she strove to conjure up the figure of him she once had sworn to love for ever; in vain she fixed her eyes on the rising moon, and thought that he too might be looking at it. These methods of exciting interest had been tried too often, and languid was the feeling they produced. Imagination refused to give back the form that two years had nearly obliterated from her memory.

Alicia was not inconstant; she was romantic from nature, listless from idleness. Her generous mind was early debased by flattery, and enervated by unbounded indulgence. She soon felt that her influence at home, and consideration abroad, were owing to her beauty, and she naturally prized it as the quality from which she derived all her pleasures. The first person who taught her to appreciate this gift as a blessing, met with more than indulgence from the then childish Alicia. She was too generous not to fancy herself in love with a man so much in love with her. He had no fortune—so much the better; she should prove her disinterestedness by accepting him. Frank and affectionate, she flew to her

father, with the certainty of being approved by him. Captain Neville sent her to her nursery, and her lover abroad. Alicia received a letter from him, telling her the Captain had procured a situation for him in India, upon condition of his giving up all hopes of her.

Miss Neville wept at first in despair; but she had read too many novels not to have heard of forged letters, cruel parents, &c. &c. She remained satisfied that her lover was not, could not be to blame, and that there was some plot to marry her to some one else. This imaginary plot she determined to resist most vigorously, and inwardly vowed eternal fidelity to her injured lover. Time, however, passed away, and she heard no more of him, or of any other pretender. She still, however, continued to think herself the victim of love, while in fact she was only the victim of ennui and exaggerated sensibility, and sighed over the vacuum of thought, the monotony of existence, with the firm persuasion that her sighs were caused by the absence of a man whom she had almost forgotten.

Alicia was aroused from the reverie into which she had fallen, by the voice of her mother. She instantly approached the window:

"Your father wants to speak to you, my dear," said Mrs. Neville.

Alicia entered. "You need not stand before me in that way," said Captain Neville, "as if you were in a hurry to be gone; I have something to say to you."

She seated herself in silence: her father fidgetted in his arm-chair, took a pinch of snuff, and knew not how to begin. Alicia tenderly replaced a cushion that had ceased to support the Captain's gouty foot. She appeared so lovely as she bent over him, she had so fascinating an air of softness and interest, such a bright, fresh, transparent look of youth, that her father's eyes lost all their sternness as they fell upon her.

"This little white hand," said he, affectionately taking hers, "must not be entirely monopolized by a parent:

soon I shall have the pleasure of conferring it on one as worthy of my Alicia as any one can be."

Miss Neville's hand grew cold in her father's grasp. She lifted her beautiful eyes to his face, with such a beseeching expression, that he half determined to let her have her own way; but ambition soon extinguished the first feeling of compunction at distressing her. He had reasons too for this marriage, which none knew but himself, and which, indeed, were most cogent. With a look of assumed severity, therefore, he told her his intentions concerning her marriage with Lord ———, made a pompous display of all the advantages of birth and fortune which his Lordship possessed, and enumerated as many of his good qualities as his memory or his imagination presented him with.

At first he was rejoiced at the calm with which his orders were received; but tired at last of getting no answer, he turned abruptly towards his daughter, and was shocked at the deadly paleness of her face.

"Why, my dear child!" he exclaimed, half vexed and half irritated, "what can be the matter with you? You are the only Miss of seventeen I ever heard of, who would not be delighted with such good fortune. Come, be a reasonable girl; consider of it at your leisure; make up your mind as quickly as you can, for you know I am not to be disobeyed."

"May I not hope for some delay, at least?" asked his trembling daughter.

"Harkye, young lady," said the Captain; "no trifling with me: you want it to be put off, in hopes of getting rid of it entirely. You know I am determined: when I have said a thing, it must be done; the sooner the better; so you need not talk upon the subject."

Alicia bowed her head with an air rather of pride than submission. It did not escape her father; but he did not fear any decided opposition on her part, for he knew her to be helpless and timid; and he expected that a little praise, the next morning, would disperse the cloud which now hung upon her brow.

Captain Neville, although a violent man, wanted no either sense or penetration in his judgment of women however, he betrayed neither. Occupied with his pro fession at the time of life that we are most open to im pressions from others, he lived little in their society; an when he sought them, it was with the sort of feeling wit which a man, buried in study, escapes for a moment fro mental fatigue to skim through the pages of a nov which he despises and condemns. In his eyes, there fore, the highest merit of woman was her beauty; he greatest talent, that of trifling agreeably. He felt no that even to do that well denotes a mind, that better di rected might do better things.

He married, for love, a very pretty girl; but his pro fession called him often from home, and at each retur he found his wife less young and less pretty. Youth health, and high spirits, were Mrs. Neville's principa charms. She had a large family; most of them die when a few years old. She had no particular sensibilit or extraordinary strength of feeling; but she was a mo ther, and in the grave of her children was quickly bu ried her health and spirits. Her freshness gone, he bright colours flown, her graceful figure deprived of it strength and elasticity, she was no longer the being Cap tain Neville had adored.

For a moment, he endeavoured to find a companio in his wife; he fretted at her folly, and soon destroyed by his violence and ill-humour, that liveliness which h had formerly so much admired. His contempt for wo men increased; and when he heard of the death of hi only remaining son, he delayed his return home, an scarce bestowed a thought upon his surviving daugh ters. Time and increasing infirmities, warned him t quit his fatiguing profession.

He came home to be nursed, with a fortune much in creased, but with a temper soured still more than ever b the sense of his injustice to his family. He could no help feeling he was grown old, but he was shocked an surprised to find his wife so too. She was not even th

wreck of loveliness; she was a pale, placid-looking being, seeing badly, hearing worse, dressing like her housekeeper, and talking (for *converse* she could not) of her neighbour's dinners, her childrens' health, and her dreams about the Captain's return.

He was quickly reconciled to this terrible change in his wife, or rather he forgot every thing about her when he beheld his eldest daughter. She was about fourteen, and the perfection and brilliancy of her beauty transported him. He was well enough pleased with the youngest too, who, hardly seven years old, had all the loveliness once possessed by her mother, with a frank, affectionate disposition, and that sort of keenness of intellect which so often passes for understanding. She was of an age to be a pleasant plaything for Captain Neville; and if he idolized the beautiful and gentle Alicia, he laughed at the sprightliness of Lucy, and bore from her thoughtless tongue a degree of sauciness which would have inflamed him with rage if proceeding from any one older than his merry daughter.

CHAPTER II.

La félicité est dans le goût, et non pas dans les choses; et c'est par avoir ce qu'on aime qu'on est heureux, non par avoir ce que les autres trouvent aimables. *Maximes de la Rochefoucauld.*

MISS NEVILLE spent the night in weighing her father's words, and determining her own conduct. She required great occasions to call forth the vigour of her character, but she was by nature enterprising and resolute. The adulation she received had warped her mind; she had no longer energy for trifles; it was by sweetness and beauty she gained every thing; she sought, therefore, only to be more lovely and more gentle: the fire of her dark eye gave place to sickly languor; her voice, powerful and flexible, was taught to produce no tones but those faint melodious ones, those half-breathed accents which suited her romantic sensibility.

Naturally generous, she early imbibed a false idea of greatness of soul: she persuaded herself it existed solely in sacrifices. She knew the arbitrary disposition of her father. She felt she could only escape the marriage proposed, by one still worse. But her own fate was not what troubled her. Her beauty and sweetness were weapons of which she had often seen the power; she felt sure with them of never being ill-treated: and as to mental misery, what romantic lady in her teens but would rejoice to devote herself to it, when it would prove her constancy to her lover?

"No," said Alicia, "I have sworn to love Edward for ever; and shall he hear that, regardless of my vow, I am married to a man whose age and attractions render him a *possible* object of attachment to me? Shall he

suppose I have sacrificed him to rank and fortune?—that I am inconstant, or have sold myself a willing slave to grandeur? Forbid it, Heaven! Yes, I will marry, since marry I must; but he whom I shall chose, will save me from such foul suspicions. He has no wealth with which to bribe me—no titles, to outshine my Edward. His age, his talents, his information, will make my choice respectable, even in my father's eyes, and Edward—will acquit me."

Thus wantonly did the romantic Alicia rush upon her fate, and sacrifice herself for the mere pleasure of the sacrifice; for a little, a very little steady reflection, would have taught her how indifferent she really was to this absent lover. Oh! if, in this outset of life, one friendly voice had raised itself, one judicious counsel been offered, to warn the young adventurer of the rocks on which it was so easy to strike,—the beautiful, the gentle, the affectionate daughter of Captain Neville, would have been a very different being—would have had a very different fate. But where should she seek advice? —from a fond, passive mother, whose arguments would be without effect, as her intellect was without strength? —from a sister, whose tender age allowed not of the possibility of her judging?—from companions, who, awed by superior beauty and superior fortune, were rather her followers than her friends, and who, she felt, envied more than they loved her? Alas! it was on her own mind alone that Miss Neville could rest; and even if that mind had been cultivated and strengthened by education, how fallible must be the judgment of seventeen!—how unfortunate the girl who has no other to depend upon!

Miss Neville descended to breakfast with that serenity of countenance which accompanies a fixed resolution. Her mother saw in it only the return of her good-humour; and although she wondered at the apparently easy acquiescence of her daughter, she rejoiced in it too much to examine the probable reasons. Indeed, Mrs. Neville had no genius for investigation: it was

nothing new to her not to understand those about her; and as the few opinions she professed, were more the result of impressions than calculations, she changed them with the utmost facility, and, when fairly dismissed from her mind, soon forgot that ever they had been hers.

Captain Neville was too full of his own plans and projects to attend much to his daughter, and was only glad to escape the tears and prayers he had expected. The morning was far advanced, and the eyes of the impatient Alicia had often wandered to the clock on the mantel-piece, and as often wondered at the lagging hand of Time, when she heard the galloping of horses; and soon her suspense was relieved by her mother's saying, "Here comes Mr. Clairville. I think he lives here."

In spite of the observation, Mrs. Neville had never thought of the attraction which thus regularly brought her visitor at the same hour; not that she by any means undervalued her daughter's charms, but that she thought a man of Mr. Clairville's time of life, with a daughter grown up, could not presume to think of her beautiful Alicia. It was in vain that the good-natured visitor had often sought to lower his conversation to a level with Mrs. Neville's understanding: that level was not easily found; and Mr. Clairville fatigued himself, but failed to amuse her,—so completely, indeed, that whenever he called, she discovered she had some employment that carried her out of the room.

She quitted them, as usual, on this day; and Alicia, who was eager in the execution of her plan, and dreaded her mother's return, scarce waited for the opening Mr. Clairville's passionate admiration gave her, to consent to become his wife on condition of their marriage taking place immediately. This was not likely to be an ob jection to Mr. Clairville; neither did Alicia's motiv (which she very candidly confessed to him) prove any for, although Mr. Clairville read in it more fevered sen sibility than cool judgment, he was too much in love t quarrel with any feeling that threw the beautiful Alici

into his arms. In short, their plans were well laid, and executed without difficulty; and, five days from that time, Alicia wrote to her father and mother to implore their forgiveness for her marriage with Mr. Clairville.

Mrs. Neville wept, and knew not what to think: the Captain stormed and swore, and wrote to say he gave her up for ever; that she should never more appear before him; that he would not give her a farthing, and should try to forget he ever had so undutiful a child. Alicia shuddered as she read his enraged epistle, and almost repented the rash step she had taken.

Mr. Clairville smiled—"Do not alarm yourself, my best love," said he; "this is too violent to be lasting."

He was right. The Captain took a worse fit of the gout than usual: he wanted his daughter to nurse him; and though he was too proud to send for her, he readily acceded to the prayer of little Lucy, "that sister might come in for one minute." He refused, however, to see Mr. Clairville; and that gentleman was aware the resolution was likely to be kept; for if he forgave his son-in-law, he must give his daughter a portion,—and there were objections to that, which his magnificent style of living did not conceal from Mr. Clairville.

Alicia, however, who respected her husband more than she loved him, did not feel very unhappy at a coolness between him and Captain Neville, which would not in any way affect her comfort; and, delighted at being again received into her father's favour, she wished for nothing else. Totally ignorant of every thing relating to money, Mrs. Clairville was as well satisfied to receive it from her husband, as she had formerly been in accepting it from her father. Accustomed to luxuries, which her parents had constantly showered upon her, she did not wonder at a doating husband increasing, if possible, in indulgence. It was to her as much a matter of course as the praises he continually bestowed on her beauty, or the effect it excited when she appeared in the world.

Never had she been seen any where without exciting

a general buzz of admiration, that ran through the circle where she stood. It was not extraordinary that it should continue to follow her, and be expressed with more elegance in the more polished societies in which she now moved. Her vanity might be confirmed, but could hardly be increased: it might strike deeper to the very root of the character; but was not in outward appearance either assuming or impertinent, for it was nothing new.

A wise man, it might be supposed, would have sought to rectify the slight flaws in the mind of so amiable a being; but a man of talents is not necessarily a man of right feeling. Neither the genius nor the benevolence of Mr. Clairville had guarded him against those tenets of infidelity which were just at that time avowed every where, under the specious mask of philosophy. If it was impossible entirely to chill a heart replete with pure and noble feelings, it gave to his character a cast of selfishness that told him it was a duty to be as happy as it was possible in this world, without intentionally hurting others; and when happiness was no longer to be found, it would be a folly to stay lamenting it.

Thus, with the determination to make the best of life, and quit it the moment he could find no good in it, he shrunk from the labour of rectifying errors in the judgment and education of his wife, when her beauty and her sweetness were enough to make him happy, and he fondly hoped his indulgence would ever make her so. Her very helplessness interested him; and if a remark of hers, which did not announce any maturity of understanding, sometimes wounded his ear, she was so young and so lovely that it was impossible to be disgusted!

It was rather a misfortune for Alicia, that she was not more glaringly absurd, as that might possibly have roused her husband, who really loved her, to take some pains to enlighten a mind that for want of culture and guidance was daily losing every faculty which Nature

had meant to be bright and powerful. Thus, by a singularity of fate, Mrs. Clairville was the wife of a man of strong abilities, affectionate disposition, and long past the giddy period of youth, without having a better chance of becoming a sensible woman, than while residing with a silly mother and a capricious father.

CHAPTER III.

"Then for a while, in giddy noise,
The revels shake the plain;
One hour is spent in empty joys,
And all beyond is pain."

"WHAT can take you out so early this morning, Mr. Clairville?" said Alicia, a few months after their marriage.

"I am going to fetch my daughter from school," he replied. "Do you not know that this is holiday time?"

"I did not know Miss Clairville had been at a school."

"Indeed?" said her husband, smiling; "where then could you fancy I had hid her?"

"I never thought about it," said she, in a pensive tone.

Alarmed by her manner, the affectionate Mr. Clairville eagerly asked of what she was thinking.

"That I have been the means," said she, after a momentary hesitation, "of keeping your daughter at school, when she is old enough to be at home. I am afraid she will be angry with me—that she will dislike me;" and her bright eyes swam in tears.

"Dislike you!" passionately exclaimed her husband; "if any one could be found capable of such a sentiment, it would never be *my* daughter."

Alicia smiled languidly; but neither Mr. Clairville's praises nor his caresses could perfectly restore her spirits, which something like a consciousness of injustice towards her husband's child sunk to a painful degree.

She prepared, however, to atone to Lydia Clairville for the neglect she had experienced, by every kindness and attention in her power. Here, then, was an opportunity of fortifying by exertion all the better feelings of the lovely Alicia; but, alas! it was not her fate to be useful and rational.

Miss Clairville arrived, and received all the promises of affection on the part of her youthful stepmother with a proud taciturnity and cold reserve, which not even the presence of her father could induce her to dissemble. Alicia's heart was chilled; but still she continued her cares, and even her tenderness, with the humility of a timid being who fears to have offended, rather than with the authority of Mr. Clairville's wife.

His daughter, however, was not to be won. This young lady was about sixteen: there was nothing in her appearance or manner to render her in the least remarkable. With a very high spirit, which did not quite amount to ill-temper, she had a keen perception of the ludicrous and unbounded admiration for genius. She was not devoid of kindness to those who were not in her way, or of general good feelings; but she had no sensibility;—therefore, it was not by the heart, but the head, she was to be led. Mr. Clairville's talents, information, and time of life, all secured to him his daughter's obedience; but he was almost the only person to whom she thought obedience due. Piqued at the former neglect of her stepmother, half envious of her brilliant beauty, and half jealous of the unbounded love which her husband showed for her, Lydia surveyed her with no conciliating feeling.

To a mind of sensibility, the endearing gentleness of the beautiful Alicia, her unbounded indulgence, her care to avoid wounding the being thrown upon her protection, either by constraint or carelessness, would have been a proof of the sweetness of her temper, the delicacy of her feelings, and the kindness of her heart. But Lydia, awake only to the charms of intellect, was rather provoked at, than grateful for, the softness of her

stepmother. Decided in her own opinions and feelings, she delivered them without consideration or reserve, and in that quick tone, and with that sharp manner, which defies argument and silences opposition. By degrees, the timid Alicia almost learned to dread the school-girl, and sensible that she possessed more information than herself, she shrunk from all contest with her, and was ready to yield even before she was required to do so.

Lydia's contempt for the ignorance, the irresolution, and the bashfulness of "the Beauty," as she called her, increased daily: she took little pains to conceal it, except before her father, to whom she still looked up, although not with the same degree of reverence which she had felt for him before she was witness to the hourly increase of praise and devotion he offered up at the shrine of the lovely and beloved Alicia. Mr. Clairville felt this; and conscious that his daughter's manner to his wife showed that in her heart she despised her, and also contributed to attach a degree of ridicule to his own impassioned expressions, he grew reserved and stiff in her presence.

Alicia thought him ill; but Lydia, less generous, persuaded herself that her father had been prejudiced against her by his wife's misrepresentations. This feeling was probably increased by the consciousness of having deserved the dislike of Mrs. Clairville; and it now became in her mind a decided thing, that Alicia's gentleness was assumed, as becoming to a beauty; and that those large black eyes, which sudden emotion would cause to flash with meaning usually buried in her own breast, had betrayed the secret of her character, and were veiled, in general, in artificial softness.

Believing she had convicted her of hypocrisy, Lydia's contempt had increased, and, with it, that share of pertness which generally falls to the lot of school-misses. Mrs. Clairville was vexed,—she was even half angry; but Lydia was so completely in her power, that she forbore to express it. By nature sincere as well as gentle, she no longer treated her troublesome inmate with af-

fection, but rather with the attention you would bestow on a visiter. There was something now so dignified in her manner, so placid, yet so cold, in her look, that Lydia was struck with surprise, as if suddenly beholding another character.

When, however, she saw her again in society,—sweeping, in her wide extending train, alike the wise and the giddy, the young and the middle-aged,—smiling on all with that expression of melancholy sensibility, which she so carefully nurtured, as productive of pleasure to herself, and admiration in others;—when she listened to the half-formed accents that lingered on her lips, often dying away ere they expressed any thing, but not before they added to her powers of fascination,—Miss Clairville again smiled with disdain, and turned haughtily from her, sickening at the affectation which she scrupled not to call folly, and envious of the beauty she was forced to acknowledge.

Lydia was just near enough being pretty, to wish ardently to be thought so; but not near enough to succeed in her wish. Provoked at finding herself completely lost in the crowd that surrounded her stepmother, and forgotten by all but that stepmother, who still strove to direct attention towards her, she felt with bitterness that her life would pass away in as complete oblivion, while following the admired Alicia, as if she still continued to work filagree at school. She was, in every sense of the word, her rival, alike in her father's heart, and in the brilliant drawing-room. Every where she was made to feel her superiority, and that superiority was just of the kind she most objected to acknowledge.

Had Mrs. Clairville possessed more marked talents, and less cloying sweetness, Lydia would have forgiven her even her beauty, and still more easily, perhaps, her influence with her father. It was not so much the homage that was rendered, but the quality that called it forth, which excited the envy and wonder of Lydia. She too would have bowed with others before genius, talent, superiority of mind; but before one whom unjustly

she thought a fair idol, and nothing more, her high spirit refused to bend.

The time for leaving London arrived, and Mr. Clairville proposed to his wife going to some watering-place. She had the attention to consult Lydia, but Lydia had not the grace to feel it. She replied sullenly, that all places were alike to her, and prepared to accompany them with an increased sense of her own insignificance in her father's eyes. This was not lessened by the journey; during which, every care was lavished on the helpless and timorous beauty; while the more lively and independent Lydia was suffered to shift for herself. This was, on her father's side, from design; and on Alicia's, from forgetfulness.

Mr. Clairville was deeply irritated at the increasing asperity of his daughter's manner. He determined she should feel *his* neglect, that she might value his wife's attention. He had, however, calculated ill; for Lydia's temper did not improve, from the persuasion that her father was unjust. This unpleasant feeling having been given time to settle into a fixed opinion, it was in vain that Mr. Clairville exhorted, represented, and even menaced. The praises he lavished on his wife, the recommendation he left with his daughter to benefit by the example of so sweet a temper, gave the last blow to his influence. Looking upon him as a being so subdued by his *engouement* for his fair Alicia, as to be no impartial judge upon any subject in which she was concerned, Lydia determined upon quitting a roof where her own prejudices had prevented her from being happy, and seeking elsewhere the distinction and the preference she could not gain at home. The success of this plan was dubious; but there was enough of hope to become certainty to the eyes of sixteen, and she lost no time in arranging it.

CHAPTER IV.

Be she as foul as was Florentine's love,
As old as Sybil, and as curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xantippe, or a worse,
She moves me not; or not removes, at least,
Affection's edge in me: were she as rough
As are the swelling Adriatic seas:
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua.

SHAKSPEARE.

MISS CLAIRVILLE'S plans and intentions will best be understood by a brief recapitulation of the events of her father's life. He had been an only son, educated with all the care of injudicious tenderness. The brilliant talents and turn for expense, early observable in young Clairville, excited apprehension to an almost painful degree in the mind of his father—a calm and temperate person, who had lived long enough to dread the distinction of genius for his son, and who had suffered sufficiently from the vicissitudes of fortune, not to discourage the spirit of extravagance with which he feared his being imbued.

Mrs. Clairville, however, was by no means of her husband's opinion in these respects. She idolized her son for feelings and sentiments congenial to her own; she praised his abilities; she fed his expenses; and, even when she could no longer supply him herself, she concealed from her husband difficulties which, she knew, he could not remedy, and felt he would severely condemn. She died, and her fortune, which was much more considerable than her husband's, was left entirely to her son, as she feared Mr. Clairville would cramp his aspi-

ring genius, and cloud that early season of youth, which she persuaded herself, should be devoted solely to enjoyment.

The consequence of this ill-judged indulgence was obvious. Young Clairville learned only to exercise his expensive amusements; and even the death of his father, and the very limited income he could leave him, failed to remind him that prudence was necessary. His embarrassments increased; and he married, with the scarcely acknowledged motive of escaping the horrors of penury.

The turbulent disposition of his wife taught him to regret, with added poignancy, a conduct that, without being criminal, had left him no other resource than a marriage which rendered him a slave, by forcing him to acknowledge obligations to a woman he could not love. He had, too, prior to this unfortunate union, experienced something very like an attachment for a young woman, whose want of fortune prevented the possibility of his acknowledging it; but he could not prevent her discovering it, by symptoms very evident to one suffering under the same malady. This lady, whose name was Morlay, with uncommon generosity, considered Mr. Clairville's embarrassments as no obstacle to their union; and, with still more uncommon romance, forgot that her own poverty could not fail to be one. She thought with delight of love in a cottage, without remembering that it was not in the power of either of them to procure their cottage; and that, if procured, they would have nothing but love to live upon.

Shocked and dismayed when she heard of his marriage, she was too wise to complain, too generous to reproach, even by a look, the being she still continued to love. A frequent witness of the discomfort endured by Mr. Clairville, she cultivated her acquaintance with his wife, and used her influence to soften the asperity of her temper. Fortune, too, began to smile upon her; but money now had little value in her eyes. Others, however, were of a different opinion; and Miss Morlay sud-

denly found herself with a train of lovers. They were listened to with contempt, and rejected without hesitation.

The death of Mrs. Clairville was the dawning of a new day to Miss Morlay: no suggestions of prudence now interfered, and she had reason to think herself the first in Mr. Clairville's heart. She forgot that he was weary of matrimony; that she herself was no longer young; and that, in the friendly intercourse that had now for so many years subsisted between them, Mr. Clairville had sunk the feelings with which he had first beheld her. She waited with patience, beyond the year of his mourning; but when, a short time afterwards, she heard of his admiration for the beautiful Miss Neville, she began to lose it. Eager to praise his idolized Alicia, Mr. Clairville sought her, whose interest in his welfare had been so often proved, and by the confidence of his love, and his hopes, tortured a heart that had so long been solely his.

A little reflection might have taught Mr. Clairville the pain he was likely to inflict; but, not wishing to believe it, he accused himself of vanity whenever the idea presented itself. He felt he owed her something, and he could think of nothing so gratifying to friendship as the detail of his feelings and plans, in which she was always a feature, if not so prominent a one as Alicia Neville.

Miss Morlay's heart withered as he spoke. Full of his subject, he never once looked at his auditor; nor, when she replied, did he feel the effort with which she sought to steady her voice. Her observations on the extreme youth and childishness of Miss Neville, (for her rival was too good-humoured to call it affectation,) were heard by him with less pain than her cold encomium on her beauty. He gazed at her in silent wonder: it was the first time, for so many years, that she had not entered warmly into all his feelings. They parted less cordially than usual; for a glimpse of the truth had crossed Mr. Clairville's mind, and left there no pleasing sensation; and Miss Morlay, having suddenly discerned that she

was not the first object in his eyes, could not at once check, although she could conceal, the emotion of resentment that taught her that he was ungrateful.

Superior in every respect to his first wife, and knowing him to be indifferent to her, Miss Morlay had sought to increase his happiness without a shadow of jealousy; but the case was now widely different. If once the blooming Alicia could be obtained, she felt she would be nothing to Mr. Clairville, and the reflection was the most bitter she had ever experienced.

Time too fully justified her fears: her feelings thus thrown back upon herself, she sought in vain for somewhat to love. She recollected Mr. Clairville's daughter. She feared that any application to the father for the company of Lydia might sound like an insult to his wife; but she wrote to the young lady herself, to sound her, that, should her home be uncomfortable, she was not without friends who would shelter her with the tenderness of her lost mother. This was, perhaps, the most ill-judged step Miss, (or, as she called herself, *Mrs.*) Morlay had ever taken; but she remembered having been refused by Mr. Clairville the management of his daughter's education, upon the death of his wife, and she doubted whether he would be more willing to part with her now.

Mr. Clairville had indeed been anxious to separate Lydia and Mrs. Morlay: having himself felt the danger of false indulgence, he dreaded it for his daughter. He did perfect justice to the good qualities, both of heart and head, of his early friend; but he knew, that possessing quick enthusiastic feelings, with great pliability of temper, few people were more prone to *engouement*.

He felt that Lydia would be quickly spoiled by living with a person so prepared to make her an object; and he had sent his daughter early to school, as much to be out of the way of Mrs. Morlay's tenderness, as of her own mother's unmanageable temper.

CHAPTER V.

No, be assured, you shall not find me, daughter,
After the slander of most stepmothers,
Evil-eyed unto you. SHAKSPEARE.

IN pursuance of his ideas on this subject, Mr. Clairville had declined the offer of Mrs. Morlay, on the death of his wife; and, on his second marriage, intended to recall his daughter, and superintend the finishing of her education himself. He married indeed, but felt much too happy, too engrossed by Alicia, to think of cares and education; and a letter from Lydia, announcing the approaching vacation, was the first thing that had for some months reminded him of her existence. Her presence revived his former affection; but her slighting conduct to his gentle wife, excited equal anger and surprise.

He gazed on the peerless form of his Alicia, and listened to the melody of her voice, until he felt there must be something savage in a being who refused to love her. He saw that the thousand graces of beauty and of feeling that so enraptured him in Alicia, were as completely unmarked by Lydia as if they had not existed. He did not understand a person of keen perception and lively wit being so completely a walking statue; and he became every day so indifferent to her, that he almost regretted not having suffered Mrs. Morlay to take charge of her.

We do not, however, like to appear inconsistent; and Mr. Clairville was the last person to like it. When

his daughter requested leave to visit Mrs. Morlay, he replied, "You will learn, young lady, to behave more respectfully to my wife, before you expect any indulgence from me." This was what Miss Clairville wanted: she could now tell Mrs. Morlay, her request to see her had been refused; and it was not difficult to be pathetic upon this subject.

Strong in feeling, although mild in temper, Mrs. Morlay no sooner received Lydia's letter, than she ordered her carriage, and after two days' journey, arrived at Mr. Clairville's, just as the family were sitting down to dinner. All felt surprise; but Alicia, alone, felt nothing else. She advanced to receive her unexpected visitor, with her constant smiles and eternal languor. Mrs. Morlay had not met her since her marriage: her quick eye scanned those beautiful features with an expression of painful curiosity; and, impressed with the idea of her unkindness to her daughter-in-law, she turned with disgust from the winning softness of her manner.

She embraced Lydia with affection, and tried to appear as cordial as ever to Mr. Clairville. Meanwhile, his daughter looked forward with anxiety and alarm to the termination of this visit: she expected Mrs. Morlay would ask her questions—would exert her influence privately over her old friend. But Mrs. Morlay had none of that taste for cabals and secrecy, of which Lydia had seen so much at school. She had no idea of a plot, but was equally simple in her conversation and her actions. How Lydia trembled when she heard Mrs. Morlay say, as the servants closed the door after tea, "Well, my dear friend, now to explain why I am here so suddenly;"—and how she wondered when she heard her relate the plain truth!

Mr. Clairville listened to Mrs. Morlay's request with a clouded brow, and a glance of suspicion at Lydia showed that he guessed and resented the part she had in it. Alicia's ingenuous countenance expressed the pleasure she felt at the proposal; but she would not even look at her husband, fearful of influencing him, to

give up his daughter for her sake. There was a dead silence. Lydia scarcely breathed. "I am very grateful to you, my dear Mary," said Mr. Clairville, with effort; "but you know not what you ask."

"Yes," said Mrs. Morlay, with warmth, "I know well. I ask a friend—a companion—one to whom I can be useful—one who will repay me the affection I have felt for her parents. You would not give me your daughter when her mother left us, and I did not complain; for I never sought to deprive you of any blessing; but now that you have a wife, and are likely to have yet other ties, I do not feel it to be robbing you, when I ask for the child of my departed friend. Surely you have many things to love—you can spare me one!"

Mrs. Morlay's voice sunk, and her pale cheek gave evidence of what she felt. Alicia's beautiful eyes swam in tears, as she listened to the energetic accents of her visitor. Mrs. Morlay was struck with the sympathy her countenance betrayed, and she involuntarily said to herself, "This woman may be weak—but she cannot be mischievous.—May I hope, Mrs. Clairville," she continued aloud, "to gain your vote upon this occasion? Will you help me to obtain my Lydia?"

"What does Miss Clairville say to this plan?" said Alicia, turning towards her with none of her usual indolence of manner.

"I am too grateful for Mrs. Morlay's kindness not to wish to profit by it," said the terrified Lydia.

"We all agree then," said Mrs. Clairville, "in our wishes; but your father, I know, will only be decided by what he thinks right: perhaps we had better leave Mrs. Morlay with him;" and she rose to quit the room.

"Stay, my love," said her husband impetuously; "why should you force me? I *have* decided.—Lydia," said he sternly, "the offer Mrs. Morlay now makes, is but the repetition of a former one. My reason for not agreeing to it then, was the fear, that indulgence, such as I knew you would meet with, would have a baneful effect on your character, and injure your temper. I

have had proof that I was right, when the gentleness, nay, the generosity of my wife, rather seems to have irritated your prejudices against her, than soothed them. I am more than ever convinced that wholesome restraint alone will prevent your growing up waspish, petulant, and affected: however, you have sense enough not to become all this, if you do not choose it. I had determined to send you from my house, because I will keep no one in it to insult my wife—

"My dear Mary," he continued, turning to Mrs. Morlay, "on yielding to your request, I have not only fear for this perverse girl, but the greatest dread of preparing misery instead of comfort for you. You do not know Lydia. My wife—"

"Your wife," said Alicia, smilingly interrupting him, "begs we may have no retrospections. I have no doubt of Miss Clairville behaving well to Mrs. Morlay, whom she has known from her cradle, and been in the habit of looking up to and admiring. She will have no prejudices—natural prejudices, perhaps, they are—to contend with. In her father's house she could be but a secondary object: when she becomes the first, she will not be captious or jealous. When my heart opened to receive her as your child, she refused to love me; and, I fear, I might have lived with her for years, without recovering the chill it gave me. Do not be harsh to your daughter—I have no merit in being gentler, for I am happier: when she is so too, you will not have to complain of her temper."

Mr. Clairville only answered his wife by a look which gave a sudden pang to the heart of their guest; yet Mrs. Morlay was not, like Lydia, blind to the many charms that gave the force of witchery to her rival's beauty. She felt, that beneath that wondrous softness lay concealed a strength of feeling, of which, indeed, sparks alone were visible; but which, more enforced, might produce a more marked character than that of a fashionable beauty. She had beheld with wonder the changes of her countenance and manner;—it was the

vague of feeling that usually deprived her of all appearance of energy or decision. She was perfectly certain of her opinions about her daughter-in-law; and her tone, therefore, assumed the strength of one who knew what she was saying, and was not afraid of others knowing it.

Miss Clairville had quickness enough to see the effect that this scene had upon her benefactress; but she had also sense enough to make no comments on it, while yet it remained fresh in Mrs. Morlay's mind. As upon this subject, Alicia appeared in the light of a rational as well as an amiable woman, Lydia could only pray for a change of conversation; but Mrs. Clairville, satisfied with unusual exertion, scarcely gave a languid assent to any of her husband's after-remarks, and pretended not to make any of her own. Lydia felt that Mrs. Morlay's embrace was less affectionate when they parted for the night, and she trembled lest her opinion of her should be changed. On the following day was to be a *fête champêtre* in honour of her stepmother's birthday; and it occurred to her, that, could she prevail upon Mrs. Morlay to stay for this, Alicia would return to what she thought her real character, and lose the ground she had gained in the esteem of their visitor.

With some difficulty, this plan was carried into effect. Mrs. Clairville shone in all the grandeur of diamonds and beauty; she received the incense of flattery, that poured upon her from every quarter, with courteousness, but without emotion; for the same habit which rendered it necessary to her, deprived it of half its effect. In the course of the evening, her young sister, in an appropriate dress, was to sing some verses of Mr. Clairville's writing, in praise of the natal day of his Alicia. The child's voice was drowned in applause; and Mrs. Clairville bent gracefully forward to thank her sister, who flew into her arms to conceal tears which sprung as much from timidity as affection. The beautiful eyes of Alicia caught the infection; and Lydia looked triumphantly

at a scene calculated to answer every purpose she wished with Mrs. Morlay.

That lady, indeed, gazed and wondered: she felt as if she were at a play where she alone was a spectator all others seemed to have some part assigned to them and the queen to whom they all bowed half provoked and half fatigued the plain sense of Mrs. Morlay. She pronounced her sweetness and her sensibility to be bordering on affectation, her beauty to approach near to insipidity. If, indeed, for a moment she looked from her, the next glance filled her with fresh admiration but, displeased with her manner, and hurt at the idolatry of her husband, which, to those not equally in love could not fail of appearing ludicrous, Mrs. Morlay declared, that any painter who coloured well, could make a more interesting picture. It is true, that she could think of none whose tints were at once so rich and so delicate, so vivid and so harmonized.

Alicia's great effect seemed to be from contrast. Never was a brow so fair and clear, from which hair so black and glossy sprung. If the bloom on the cheek might have been equalled, the shade from her dark, sweeping eye-lashes, gave a mellowness to the colour, as uncommon as it was lovely. The glowing ruby of her lips was always beautiful; but when they unclosed and contrasted with the brilliant white of her teeth, you thought you had never admired her before. Many were found to laugh at the languishing softness of her manner; but none who saw her pretended to dispute her acknowledged loveliness; and those faults in her face and form they had discovered in her absence, when next she appeared were felt to have been imaginary.

CHAPTER VI.

Quand l'homme commence à raisonner, il cesse de sentir.
J. J. Rousseau.

The day that was to decide the fate of Lydia seemed hailed by all parties with pleasure. Mrs. Clairville had often felt hurt, although she would not allow herself to be offended, by the conduct of her step-daughter; and, satisfied at her departure, and at the prospect of comfort Mrs. Morlay's kindness held out to her, she willingly dismissed from her mind all recurrence to the past, or anticipations of the future, which thus, by the interference of her husband's friends, was taken out of her hands.

To Mr. Clairville, Lydia was a much more real annoyance. She had galled his feelings in too many ways for him to experience more for her than the interest you cannot avoid feeling for a being thrown on your protection. As he now thought of her but as one whom it was his duty to provide for, he could not but feel satisfied at that trouble being taken off his hands. He well knew, if she did nothing very outrageous, she was certain of inheriting Mrs. Morlay's fortune; and he repressed a sigh at the thought that Lydia's lot in life would be brighter than that of his adored Alicia. Mrs. Morlay herself, rejoicing in the success of her wishes, and feeling more painfully than ever the contrast between friendship and love, which the manner of Mr. Clairville displayed towards her and his wife, was eager to depart. On her journey home, the attentions and caresses of her *protegee* repaid her for what she had suffered during this short visit; but she inwardly determined it should be the last.

She kept her resolution; and when they met in London, some months after, the exchange of visiting-tickets, and a few courtesies in public, alone proclaimed their acquaintance. Mr. Clairville sometimes saw his daughter; but Lydia received him with a sort of cold respect; and her benefactress with a something so like formality, that it quickly repelled and checked his regard, and drove him home, doubly to feel the affectionate mildness of Alicia. At this moment, he more than ever wanted affection to reconcile him to himself; in which effort he sometimes failed, spite of the ingenious sophistry he could press into his service.

His extravagance, which had increased on his second marriage, from a wish to amuse or adorn his wife, had thrown his affairs into a state of disorder, which his lawyer pronounced to be irreparable. He had long expected this, and viewed it with indifference, as an evil to be easily put an end to; but now, as the time drew near, he thought with anguish of leaving his Alicia—with greater still, of being condemned by her when no more! That she, the idol of his heart, should despise his conduct, and shudder at his memory, was not to be endured.

To relinquish his project he thought impossible; he could not live the beggar he had made himself; he could not expect, he could not wish, his wife to share with him poverty and disgrace. At his death, she could return to her father, and lead the life she did before her marriage, without the pain of voluntarily separating herself from him. But how should he prepare a creature so gentle, so young, so timid, for a deed so desperate and unhallowed?

He saw the weakness of his own arguments, and felt the only conclusive one to be selfish in the extreme: "But she must not learn to think of me with abhorrence," he repeated to himself: and, doubly weak and doubly selfish, he determined on bending the ductile mind of his wife to his own comfortless tenets. He paused not to consider of all the misery he might bring upon her whose principles he was shaking; but, astonishing her by his

information, delighting her with his wit, he seemed to leave her to her own opinions, from mere indulgence, as he could either argue or laugh her out of all, at any time. Alicia was bewildered: she felt flattered at the tacit compliment to her understanding, which her husband paid, in giving her books on serious and important subjects; and, although they fatigued and made her uncomfortable, she studied them perseveringly. Yet, often some simple remark, some touching expression of regret at the destruction of so many long-cherished tenets, struck on the heart of her husband, and half caused him to repent the progress he had made in "enlightening his wife."

When once Alicia thoroughly understood her husband's theories, she returned his books.—"I believe," she said, with a melancholy smile, "that all the fancies of my childhood were my nurse's prejudices, and it is good for *you* to be without them;—but I cannot help thinking, that for me they are salutary; at least, I would not voluntarily quarrel with comfort."

Mr. Clairville saw that nothing was to be gained from a person who allowed that she might be wrong, but wished so to continue. She retired from a conflict to which she was unequal; unwilling to adopt feelings which did not soothe her, but despairing of the possibility of refuting them. He now confined himself to apologies for suicide: he took advantage of her strong feelings and high spirit, to represent, in the most eloquent manner, what he called the folly of a free agent, submitting tamely to coils which one effort of courage could annihilate. Alicia listened and shuddered: her natural timidity taught her to shrink from death; and in proportion as she feared it, she admired the being resolute enough to meet it voluntarily.

"Are we then, indeed, accountable to none but ourselves for this life, which another conferred upon us?" she asked, with trembling anxiety.

"If we are accountable to others," replied her husband, "it is mockery to call us free;—and yet, that we

are so, is undeniable. Power or address may be necessary to influence others; but my own will I can always pursue, so long as it is independent of others; my own fate I can retard or accelerate, for it is in my own hands."

"That is to say, you can destroy yourself," said Mrs. Clairville; "but you cannot save yourself: this appears to me to be a negative power."

"I do not say, our power is absolute," answered Mr. Clairville, "because we depend upon others for many comforts;—that is a fault in the order of things, that perhaps some day may be remedied;—all I assert is, that we need never suffer longer than we please, because we have the power to end those sufferings whenever we grow weary of bearing them. You may call this a *negative* happiness, but you will allow it is a *positive* relief."

Alicia sighed and remained silent. She had never had any sufferings but such as arose from her romantic fastidiousness of feeling and sentiment; she could fancy no misery to which death could appear a relief; and she retained from this conversation only a vague alarm, whenever her husband's brow clouded, that he was wearying of existence, and might be desperate enough to quit it. But these terrors faded away when his serenity returned; and again Mrs. Clairville found in dissipation all that pleasure which those only can appreciate who have been courted like her.

Her house was the rendezvous of the great and the gay, attracted by her unexampled beauty, her husband's social powers, and yet more by the omnipotence of fashion, which had early thrown its spell over Alicia, at the signal of *his* admiration, whose admiration in *those days* was every thing. The youthful beauty listened to flattery from royal lips with a sensation of unwonted triumph. To the applause of others she was inured; and although it had become necessary to her, it was insipid; but from this quarter she received it with humility and real pleasure.

It was not the mere glare and splendour of rank that had so much effect upon Alicia. Who, without admiration, could mark the dignified ease, the unstudied elegance, the courtly urbanity of manners, so formed to captivate? Even among those whose prejudices against this illustrious personage were most bitter and inveterate, none were found to resist the charm of his converse, when it was his intention to please. Little used to calculate or combine, Mrs. Clairville could not help hoping that the kindness of this powerful friend would not be merely nominal. Her husband's talents fitted him for any public capacity, but his politics were inimical to the ministry,—they were what *at that time* were professed by his royal guest; and in *him*, therefore, Alicia placed a scarcely acknowledged confidence for the future advancement of Mr. Clairville.

Mr. Clairville guessed her thoughts, and smiled—not in contempt, for his was not the contracted mind which calls nought wisdom but the incredulity which experience brings with it. He admired and envied the freshness and purity of feeling which prompted his wife to expect from others all the benevolence of which she herself was capable. He would not undeceive her; but he himself had lived too long among men, to place any dependence upon them; too near princes, not to know that they too were men, liable to greater temptations, and, consequently, to greater errors, than those beneath them.

The chilling doctrines of philosophy, too, had taught him, that our feelings and actions being necessarily selfish, we are unreasonable if we expect from others exertions in our favour by which they are to gain nothing. Helvetius himself did not more thoroughly refer every thing to our personal interest, than did the husband of Alicia. He had lived amongst parties and cabals, where this doctrine could be studied to advantage. In this principle, an excuse could be found for the greatest crimes; and Mr. Clairville rejoiced in a system which allowed him to tolerate, in his intimate

and agreeable acquaintance, conduct that wounded h
less callous feelings.

Thus did he become more apparently indulgent t
the world, from a conviction of its follies and vices. H
ridiculed those who felt indignation at what he believe
to be inevitable; and, in his increased contempt f
human nature, he learned forbearance towards the mo
guilty. In acquiring this false gentleness, he thoug
he had gained much; and forgot that where we lose t
abhorrence of vice, we naturally also lose sympathy wi
virtue. That only is real indulgence which induces
to doubt all errors not perfectly proved, and to forgi
what we are forced to believe. But such indulgen
requires a heart "open to melting charity," a mind u
chilled by scepticism, a soul on which the black nig
of Infidelity has never loured.

None, surely, who has felt enthusiastic belief in e
cellence, would suffer those bright feelings to be clou
ed, even were they certain of being for ever duped
Could it be proved to be an allusion, it is barbarous
seek to deprive us of it; for what purifying, what e
alted, what noble principle can exist in our own mind
when we have learned to doubt all that is pure, grea
and noble in that of others?

CHAPTER VII.

———What is life
To him that's born to die?
Or what the wisdom whose perfection ends
In knowing, we know nothing?
The Tragedy of Fatal Curiosity.

THE society in which Mr. Clairville delighted, and early introduced to his wife, contributed much to bend her mind to those principles, so unsatisfactory, so dangerous in practice, so apparently just and wise in theory. To weaken the sense of religion in the mind, is doubly cruel towards a woman. Helpless, affectionate, and confiding, in depriving her of reliance on the continued watchfulness and indulgence of an Almighty Being, you not only throw her on the world without invariable, unalterable principles, and consequently without defence in the day of trial, but you deprive her of daily, nay, hourly comfort. If she errs, who is to forgive her? if she suffers, who is to console her? It is because she is weak, that it is delightful to feel another is strong.

From the nature of her pursuits, she has more leisure for reflection and anxiety on the future than others can have. While she believes in a Providence that ordereth all things aright, in whose plans for the benefit of the generality that of the individual is *never* omitted; while she feels that events thus ordered may be incomprehensible but cannot be unjust, she acquires that strength of mind which no human power can shake, and with the confidence that all will eventually be well, the strong hope of present happiness naturally mingles.

Against the wit and the ridicule of her acquaintance, Alicia had no real answer. If she argued, it could be but from her feelings, and those feelings were all confused. To a young mind, what is so pleasing as to wander in a labyrinth, meeting, at every step, enough of sensation to give a pleasing conviction of existence, and not enough of emotion to harass or pain? The very certainty, that by a strong effort you might escape from the mazes in which you are bewildered, binds you the more firmly.

If vague, undefined sensations are pleasant to most people, they are doubly encouraged by those who feel it to be an additional interest and charm to beauty. No wonder, then, that Alicia had ever given way to wildering feelings, which admitted not of argument, and from which, therefore, she could extract no real opinion, or convincing sentiment.

Regularly every Sunday had she followed Mrs. Neville to church, before her marriage, and regularly did she now continue the practice. It was a habit that gave her no trouble to pursue; and she long continued to attach to it a vague idea of duty, even when she had earned to believe the prayers offered up to the Supreme were as useless to herself, as unnecessary to her Creator. Perhaps, had she been in childhood taught the *spirit*, as well as the *forms* of religion, she might still have been dazzled by her husband's talents, and those of his friends. Without instruction, or study of any other kind than that of dress, Alicia naturally adopted the expressions, and occasionally the sentiments, of those she most frequently conversed with.

Nothing could be so singular as this mixture of romantic and generous feelings, which were the result alike of her ignorance and her benevolence, and those which sprung from the profound knowledge of the worn part of our nature, and which were adopted by her, be cause they struck her imagination as clever, withou ever pretending to investigate them. If her conversa tion appeared to some extraordinary, others were n

less surprised at the pensive and almost melancholy turn of her beautiful features. Loving her husband, and cherished by him with almost extravagant fondness; courted, admired, idolized wherever she appeared, her life seemed one continual round of pleasures: her character, then, was incomprehensible, and therefore, of course, interesting. Every one accounted for it according to his own disposition; and often was a sigh from the fatigued beauty the signal for others to invent for her woes of which she had never dreamed. While in the imagination of numbers she was the heroine of some hapless tale, there were not wanting some who would gladly have realized the sorrows, which as yet had but a visionary existence.

Admiration was not the only sentiment she excited, and hers was not the beauty to strike withal. Yet, although many insinuated their passion, none openly avowed it; restrained in part by the interest which innocence and purity inspire in the breasts of all not thoroughly perverted, and in part by the fear of finding themselves competitors with a rival more likely to succeed. Of his own success however, or indeed of his wish to succeed, this powerful rival was by no means certain. He was one who, following the impulse of the moment, would almost always act kindly, if not wisely: he never set out with the intention to injure, yet no one could feel certain that he should be uninjured by him; for what he thought to-day, was well known to be no rule for what he might think to-morrow.

Virtuous emotions are no safeguard against vicious actions. Nothing can fix the conduct and presence from inconsistency but rigid principles, and those unhappily—unhappily for himself—*most* unhappily for others—were never given the accomplished admirer of Alicia. Solicitous to please her whose beauty had attracted him, he sought to interest her, without acknowledging to himself that he was paving the way to guilt. Even could he have boasted, that to him there was no danger in temptation, it was the interest of too many

to urge him to errors, which would necessarily give them a portion of his confidence for escape to have been possible.

How rarely may a Prince be virtuous, since to the passions of other men is added the power of circumstances, in which other men are not placed,—in which it is the interest of no one to place them, and which combined, can hardly fail to defeat the strongest mind! Mr. Clairville had early marked his conduct, but without resenting it; for he knew him well, and he pitied oftener than he blamed him. He did not fear to lose his wife, for there was in her an innate rectitude of thought, which scarce allowed her to believe in the possibility of evil. He knew how rarely we fall in love, as it is called, with those much above us, and he had no difficulty in discovering the sort of regard Alicia felt for this illustrious lover. Yet, remembering her extreme youth, he thought it right to guard her with care, although without mistrust. His vigilance, however, relaxed after a time, as he beheld no increase of attachment on the part of her royal admirer, or any change of manner to himself.

At last a circumstance occurred which aroused him; and, after mature deliberation, he thought it would be unwise not to show his wife what dangerous ground she stood upon. She had been driving out one morning with Mrs. De La Ville, (afterwards Lady De La Ville,) and went to the dining-room immediately on her return home, intending to show her purchases to her husband. No husband, however, did she find,—but what, for the moment, delighted her more—the table covered with jewels! The transported Alicia eagerly advanced.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed aloud, as she tried the brilliants upon her arm and fingers, and alternately put down one ornament to admire the other. "I did not see at the Birthday such a diamond necklace as this!" she continued. "I wonder where they con from?" Suddenly she spied a beautiful box to hol

bonbons, set in diamonds, and of a particularly beautiful shape.

These *bonbonnières* were much the fashion at this time, and the Duchess of D—— had displayed one at the Opera, which had been the envy and admiration of all present. To have a more elegant and precious box than her Grace of D——; to set the fashion of that shape; to show her fair taper fingers to advantage, as she presented it to her neighbours—how many sources of delight to a fashionable belle! Instantly the ornaments were replaced and forgotten; nothing but this delightful box deserved a thought. She was so much engrossed by her admiration, that she saw not her husband until he stood before her.

"Oh, Mr. Clairville!" she cried, with childish joy, "see how magnificent, how lovely, all these things are! Do but look at this *bijou* of a box! Oh! I would not part with it for worlds! And this, too, is the Opera night, and I shall show it there! Is it not charming?"

"Which, my love?" replied Mr. Clairville, with a smile; "the diamonds, or the Opera?"

"O, both to be sure!" hastily answered his wife. "But you do not seem to admire them?"

"Indeed I do; but, you know, I think nothing charming but you."

"And was it to make me more so," said Alicia, laughing, "that you sent for all these gay things?"

"I am not rich enough to display the contents of all the jewellers' shops to you, and bid them court your acceptance," said Mr. Clairville. "These come from one who has more of the power, not more of the will to please. The P—— sent them to you, and I spread them on the table to enjoy your first surprise."

"How very good! how very magnificent!" replied the simple Alicia. "And may I choose what I like?"

"Without doubt," said her husband. "They are all yours, if you like. But you forget the price."

"You do not pay for a gift," said Alicia; the calm-

ness of her husband's manner subduing her satisfaction.

"These diamonds, nevertheless, have a price," said Mr. Clairville, fixing his eye steadily on his blooming wife:—"I am the price."

The glittering baubles fell from the hand of the appalled Alicia; mechanically, she retreated from the table, which now only inspired her with alarm and horror; she put her arms behind her, and continued to walk backwards, until she reached the extremity of the apartment in which she stood; then, leaning against the wall, she raised her eyes with an imploring expression to her husband's face, as if she feared the very sight of these presents had sunk her in his esteem, although she had still but a confused idea of his meaning.

"How pale you are!—my beloved; how you tremble!" said her husband, tenderly supporting her. "You cannot fear an evil you need not bring upon yourself—an evil which, I *know*, you will not bring either upon yourself or me. I did not shock you in this sudden way because I doubted you, but because I thought it the simplest way of disclosing to you the P——'s views. Now, will you return the diamonds?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Alicia, "do *you* return them. It would make me ill to look at them again."

"You would regret parting with them?" asked Mr. Clairville, with an indulgent smile.

"Do you think so meanly of me?" said his wife—some of those half-smothered feelings Nature had given her, flashing from her dark bright eyes. "I would not touch again those baneful gifts, for the wealth of fairy tales."

"Indignation is a new improvement to beauty," said Mr. Clairville; "but my Alicia is becoming under every emotion!"

CHAPTER VIII.

La philosophie triomphe aisément des maux passés, et des maux à venir: mais les maux présens triomphent d'elle.

Maximes de la Rochefoucauld.

THE season for London was over, and Mr. Clairville led his peerless Alicia from the gay haunts of the wealthy and the dissipated, to the retirement of his country residence, and the narrower circle of his more intimate associates. But, whichever way she bent her steps, the same adulation followed her—flattery in every shape pursued her: she heard it in the impassioned accents of her admirers; she saw it in the involuntary coldness of rival beauties; she felt it in the ardent love of her husband. She was the goddess, at whose shrine continual incense was offered up. Yet did she sigh beneath this load of honours; for, thoughtless as she was, she could not hide from herself how much Mr. Clairville was changed; she could not but dread what that change might portend. The idea of his violent death was become almost familiar to her, but she strove to think the period was yet far distant.

"Surely," she would say to herself, "he will live to see his child." It was more an instinctive than a rational terror, that detained her almost constantly by his side. While she was near him, she could laugh at her fears; but when he was absent, she became anxious and alarmed. There is nothing so clear-sighted as affection; and Mr. Clairville felt, that all attempts at imposing upon his wife would be ineffectual. He did, indeed, promise to himself the pleasure of blessing his unborn infant; but

he could be sure of nothing, for his life hung on a thread —on the patience of his creditors: that thread snapped, and Clairville was no more!

Alicia scarcely quitted him for an instant; yet, as she knew he had no fire-arms, she had no conception of how sudden his death would be. She returned to the room where, ten minutes before, she had left him, but he was gone. On the table lay a letter: scarcely had it met the searching eye of the anxious wife, when the whole fatal truth rushed upon her. She, shuddering, turned from the open window, and, with the swiftness of lightning, flew to the spot where he lay, one spark of hope yet quivering at her heart. She beheld him, and that blessed hope was extinct for ever!

Did the widow of the suicide rave and lament? Did she accuse the severity of fate; mourn over genius so perverted, talents so misapplied; deprecate the vengeance of offended Heaven, or weep the victim of delusion? No! she cast one look of despair at the height from which he fell—one glance of anguish over his convulsed and pallid features: it was enough—that mind, softened, enervated by indulgence, could not make another effort. Reason reeled before misery thus overpowering; and it was many weeks after the body had been conveyed to a private grave, when Alicia awoke to recollection. It was a bitter hour. Her husband, her child,—all were lost to her. She thought of Mr. Clairville's principles—principles he had sealed in his blood, and which were thus become sacred, unanswerable in her eyes.

"Wherefore should *I* live?" thought she, as her eye rested with eagerness on a bottle of laudanum standing beside her. She grasped it firmly; she heard a noise, and she concealed it beneath her pillow. It was her mother's step.

"Does she sleep?" asked Mrs. Neville of the nurse. As she quitted the room softly, Alicia's eyes filled with tears, and she hastily threw the laudanum from her.

What a reproach to her was that voice of anxious tenderness!

"Oh, no; I will still suffer," said she, "while there is in existence one being who would feel my death but half as much as I feel my husband's." She did suffer, but it was not only sorrows of the heart which overwhelmed her; the evils of poverty were strongly felt; the humiliation of being obliged to those she neither valued nor esteemed, more keenly still. The creditors seized the goods of the deceased; would not even have left the bed which supported the senseless form of his widow, if the charity of a young man, almost a stranger, had not induced him to pay more than its full value, that she might not be deprived of it.

Mrs. Clairville inquired for her father. He, it seems, was indignant at the amount of her husband's debt, outrageous at learning his daughter had given up the little she possessed to him; and that, therefore, Captain Neville had no choice but to see her starve, which was what he certainly did not wish, or to receive her into his own house, as if he were pleased with her, which he liked almost as little. She had disappointed his pride, his ambition; she had set at nought his authority; she had dared to be happy in a situation where he had assured her of misery; she presumed to regret the being who had defeated his plans—the selfish being who had left her to suffer alone.

Captain Neville still loved his daughter, still was proud of her; and suffered the dawning hope to arise, that a second union might be more to his wishes. She was not yet twenty—there was time enough before her: she was unimpaired in health and beauty,—polished by the hand of fashion,—a new interest lent to her by those early sorrows, which every one could appreciate, because they rather gave a shock to the mind, than a wound to the heart. All these were favourable circumstances, in the calculation of the ambitious father: still he felt less secure than formerly. Every thing depended upon the

precariousness of his own existence, and upon the uncertainty of Alicia's obedience.

He determined to appear even more angry than he felt, that the dread of his severity, and of the miseries of poverty, might make her more docile in future. With difficulty, however, could he keep his resolution, when his child first knelt before him in that garb of sorrow, which her countenance suited so well. The young and the beautiful rarely call in vain for sympathy. We shudder while we gaze, for life then seems so long, rest so far off.

When the storms of existence overtake us at its close, we bow to inevitable destiny, not only with submission, but without surprise: our feelings are blunted, our wishes moderated, our illusions over. But the young, the thoughtless, the impetuous, recoil from evil with wonder and terror. They know not why it should come; they know not where it may end. They set out in life, as on a party of pleasure; the sun glitters on the dark blue wave; the gay streamers float in the air; who could think of fear or danger? If it come, how should they expect it to cease, and anticipate with confidence the return of bright clear skies?—Alicia's sufferings spread an air of wildness over her pale face. While the first impression lasted, it was full of horror, and without consolation; but gradually it died away, and left behind it only the conviction that her husband was right. Of this she laboured to assure herself; for that he had erred, and would therefore be punished, was too painful an idea to find admittance to her mind.

In vain some religious friends of Mrs. Neville's sought to give the mournful widow more serious principles: her judgment had been warped, her fair spirit clouded, too powerful for human efforts to bring her back to faith and comfort. Time and experience alone could rectify errors a beloved hand had sown in her breast. She considered all condemnation of principles, she yet shrunk from believing, as an attack upon his memory, whom it behoved her to defend. This was a subject upon whi

there could be no qualifying. Errors, however flagrant, might be forgiven, for they might be repented of; but of this last desperate act, when and where should we repent?

It was too delicate a subject for a stranger to handle, with any chance of being useful; and Mrs. Neville's arguments and feelings went no farther than the regret that all those learned people should have made an atheist of her dear girl. Alicia knew she was no atheist, and assured her mother of it; but the old lady shook her head, declared she did not understand her fine words, but that, if she thought it proper to murder herself, she might just as well kill others, and no one who believed in God could kill any one.

Alicia felt that her mother never would understand her: she began to doubt whether she comprehended herself: she went over the bewildering train of arguments she had so often heard used, slowly and deliberately; she endeavoured to think, but the powers of her mind had been too long dormant, to be excited by the first effort. With a feeling of deep despondency, the young widow exclaimed, "These things are above me;" and, putting aside her books, she occupied herself with what was not above her.

CHAPTER IX.

——— I grant the deed
Is madness; but the madness of the heart.

Yo

THE apparent affluence of Captain Neville 1
his daughter to ask of him the payment of
those debts her husband had incurred to peopl
ruin was the most probable consequence. Wh
Clairville's tenets were attacked by his inferiors ir
ledge and talent, his widow could listen with plac
tempt, or reply with affectionate indignation; b
could she listen, or how reply, to the prayers an
of his poorer creditors? how could she endure tl
of poverty and misery which his thoughtlessn
caused? Then it was that her heart whispered, "
here is evil;" and the heart of Alicia never erre
her generosity and her regard alike led her to vi
her husband at her own expense.

"*I* was thoughtless, *I* was extravagant," ex
she: "it was to please, to adorn me, that he ou
fortune—and shall *I* condemn him!" Then,
refuge in her own apartment, she would read o
letter he had written a few hours before his death
much affection was there not in the sophistry tl
tated this sentiment!

"When my fate was brilliant, I attached yo
but youth and beauty like yours, my beloved, w
to be wedded to poverty—to ruin. Short has b
time we have passed together, but it has been a

time: to the bosom of an affectionate family you can now return, secure from those evils, the duration of my existence would have brought upon you; in the enjoyment of that wealth to which you have been accustomed, you will live beloved and admired, when my existence and my fate will be alike forgotten."

"Oh! never, never by me!" thought his weeping widow. Then she would consider of the possibility of repairing the mischief that extravagance had produced. She had no hope but in her father—and that hope was destined to be disappointed.

"Admirable!" exclaimed he, as she urged her request, with all the pathos of strongly excited feeling—"admirable! to expect me to suffer for the folly of your husband. No, no, Alicia! do not fancy I shall help such romantic nonsense. If you pay one creditor, you may pay them all; and, if that had been possible, Mr. Clairville would not have taken the way he did out of the scrape."

"I am not talking of my husband," said Alicia; "I would only entreat of you to repair, in some degree, the evil *I* have done—to save the people I shall otherwise have ruined. It is not to your justice, but to your generosity I apply."

"You might as well apply to neither," said Captain Neville. "I cannot pay my own debts and other people's; and I hold it wiser and better for myself and my family, to satisfy my own creditors, and let other people's shift for themselves."

"But if you can do both, my father?"

"Child! child!" exclaimed the Captain vehemently; "you know not what you are talking about: you neither know the value of money, nor how much or how little I may have. I tell you, you know nothing of these matters; so, don't bother me any more."

Thus ended the conversation, from which so much had been expected; and the young widow saw it would be vain to make any farther attempt. To her mother she dreamed not of applying; for a very limited allow-

ance, in the form of pin-money, and which but just sufficed to clothe her, was all the money with which Mrs. Neville was entrusted. The affairs of the house were completely managed by her husband, whose regular payments, and magnificent disposition, soon procured for him the reputation of being a very wealthy man.

Lucy was still a child, and from her there was neither assistance nor advice to be expected. The sale of her trinkets procured temporary relief for the objects of her compassion; and having now done what humanity and justice required of her, she returned to her first and dearest wish—a wish she had not dared to name to her father—the erecting a monument to the memory of him she mourned. To effect this, she not only disposed of all her gay apparel, but also sold the dresses destined for her lost infant. Many were the tears she shed over this, to her, bitter sacrifice.

How many pleasing hours had she spent in adding some new ornament to these baby habiliments! When she lavished all that finery upon them, under the affectionate eye of her husband, how little did she imagine she should be in want of the money thus idly expended—in want of it to rescue from oblivion the name of that very husband! These were horrible reflections, that almost made her doubt the evidence of her senses. The change in her situation had been violent as well as rapid. In lieu of the adulation which she had every where received, attention was now exacted from her. How different from the winning tenderness of her husband, was the imperious harshness of her father!

Alicia wept over this change in her lot, with a helpless, hopeless feeling of sorrow. She who had been a queen, was now a slave. She could now gain consequence only by the admiration of strangers, and s' learned to look for it with anxiety. Before her ma riage, she had often felt that her beauty gave her mo influence with her father than any other advantage, re or apparent; but she had naturally concluded, that

rejoice in such superior loveliness was but proof of his regard, which would exist independent of that outward brilliancy. But the real tenderness of Mr. Clairville had now spoiled her for affection.

She was hurt to see her father more unhappy if she allowed the sun to catch her complexion, than if he beheld her suffering under ailments physical or mental. The preservation of her beauty was become necessary to her constant comfort; but it was with a feeling approaching to humiliation, that she now dedicated a part of her time, and a considerable share of her thoughts, to her appearance. Secure in conscious loveliness, she had before attended to her dress with the pleasure a handsome woman generally feels in adorning herself, and without any consideration beyond the actual moment. But in her father's countenance she now read at every moment how far she was to expect the admiration of others, and on that admiration much of his approbation depended.

Strenuously she opposed his commands, of laying aside her mourning before the expiration of the twelvemonth; but nine months after her husband's death, she was dragged into public. There she felt her consequence unabated; she was as much the fashion as ever; and those who had pronounced her peculiar beauty to consist in the fascination of her smile, found equally irresistible charms in her touching air of sadness.

Captain Neville, although a worldly man in principle, was not such in experience. He was alarmed at the crowd of admirers which surrounded his daughter. He saw a pretender to her hand in every idle young man who dangled after Alicia, as the fashionable beauty of the day, or for want of better employment. The young widow herself, believed her power over these people to be far greater than it was; but, never wishing to exert it, she never discovered how lightly her chains were borne.

The death of her early lover in India, was a shock to Alicia, almost as great as if she still had loved him; and, sunk as her spirits were, she was glad of an excuse

to mourn. Yet, she acknowledged that his return would have given her little pleasure; for "I am dead to joy," she would often say, as Hope sought to gild some future prospect with its magic touch. Dead to affection too, she would fancy herself, even at the moment that her eloquent eyes beamed tenderness and anxiety on her young sister.

Lucy was grown a tall, pretty girl, with spirits that excited the wonder of Alicia, and wit that enchanted her father. Not that Captain Neville had the same admiration for Lucy, or the same confidence in her, that he felt and expressed for his eldest daughter. Her light step, her quick eye, were emblems of her versatile mind, which, true to nothing but mirth, glanced on every thing, and rested on nothing. Her word was law at home, as far as concerned herself; with others, she dreamed not of interfering; and her own way she had been too much accustomed to have, to be restrained at the wildest period of life.

She was gratified by affection, but little influenced by it: argument availed nothing; for Captain Neville did not reason much better than his wife, and Lucy was sure to out-talk him: violence excited her laughter and contempt, for she was not to be intimidated, and seldom to be angered. Perfectly opposite to her sister, she did not love her the less; for, their interests never clashing, she was at liberty to admire her beauty, and feel for her sorrows. The feeling, however, never was deep enough to make her melancholy; and perhaps it was fortunate for Alicia that it was not, as Lucy thus occasionally contrived to extort a smile from lips little used to wear one. A fine day, and a cheerful walk with the ever animated Lucy, would sometimes act upon the young widow with a power of which she was unconscious. Hers was that fair season of youth, when the mind, however harassed, suffers itself to be cheated into tranquillity, and catches from indifferent objects a false exhilaration. But pleasure, whether false or real, Alicia was not long to know.

CHAPTER X.

Il en est du veritable amour comme de l'apparition des esprits: tout le monde en parle, mais peu de gens en ont vu.

Maximes de Rochefoucauld.

THE second year of her widowhood commenced, and Captain Neville, anxious to finish the education of his youngest daughter, and to marry his eldest, sold his estate in the country, and took a much larger house in town than he had ever done before. At that time, neither educating nor marrying girls was quite the *business* that it has since been made; but Captain Neville had good reasons of his own for farthering these objects, and he set about it in earnest. Lucy very nearly sung herself into a consumption; and Alicia dressed until Captain Neville started at the milliner's bills. He paid them, however, without remonstrance, and Alicia never suspected she was extravagant.

Surrounded by her husband's friends, who threw the lustre of their talents upon her, she was, if possible, greeted with increased animation by those who had loved Mr. Clairville, and saw that the beautiful widow did not cease to mourn his loss. How, indeed, should she, in those very circles where his presence had so often given her self-possession, where his eye never failed to give her encouragement! In vain Alicia looked round for the cheering friend, the careful protector: she was still admired, but not as he admired her; and where was he who would have enjoyed her success? Her father and mother drank her praises with eager ears; but the widow felt how different was the expres-

sion of their countenances from that of Mr. Clairville. The admiration of the crowd raised her in their eyes, but not in those of her husband; he triumphed only that the whole world should do her justice. She was in a sort of glittering solitariness; it was the vacuum w thout the repose of solitude.

From this dream of empty, unsatisfactory brilliancy, Alicia was awakened by a passion she thought she should feel no more, and which, in fact, she had never before felt. Lord Frederick Sydney was supposed to possess more wit than judgment, more ambition than feeling, more fashion than fortune, and more idleness than all put together.

Such as he was, he bowed a willing victim at the shrine of the young widow. For a time he admired her, because he could not help it; he sighed, because he thought sighs were her due; but he soon caught himself in the wish to chase away the languor of that interesting countenance, and bring to light the half-obscured brilliancy of those bewitching eyes. Lord Frederick was not the sort of man to take such a fancy into his head to no purpose. His success, though certain, was slow, and he was piqued into greater exertions.

Alicia had accepted his attention with indifference; but he offered her love, and it was a triumph to have such an offer from one reckoned insensible. Alicia was no tyrant by nature: satisfied with inspiring affection, she demanded no proof of it, nor did she wonder at receiving none. His manner and his conversation were not to be mistaken, even if all her acquaintance had not appeared to acknowledge his attachment as an understood thing: if she did not doubt his regard upon such testimony, she was less than ever inclined to doubt it when she felt it was returned.

Captain Neville beheld this mutual affection in the greatest alarm. He had no objection, it is true, to a title; but he had the greatest to poverty, and justly considered a poor Lord to be the very poorest of all men. In vain he represented this to his daughter; she was ro-

mantic, and she was in love; reason, therefore, had little chance of being heard. It was late in the season, and Captain Neville took advantage of it to separate the lovers. He told Alicia, one morning, to prepare for accompanying him on the next into the country. She was thunderstruck, for she had no suspicion of such a plan.

With almost trembling eagerness she dressed that night for an assembly, where she was to meet Lord Frederick, perhaps, as she now thought, for the last time. She did meet him, and willingly suffered herself to be engrossed by him, almost to the exclusion of all her other admirers; yet the conversation on his part, though full of flattery and tenderness, was but what it had always been, until Alicia gently hinted it was the last they might have for a long time. Lord Frederick started in astonishment and dismay. Like her, a separation had never occurred to him as possible, and he felt ready to avert the evil at any risk. This his countenance strongly expressed; but ere his tongue could second it, a lady approached him, and effectually interrupted his conversation with Alicia.

This manœuvre, though effected with a lively playfulness that had the appearance of almost childish artlessness, was a stroke deep and dexterous; and Alicia would have so understood it, even if the malicious glance with which it was accompanied, had been spared. The lady was her rival—not indeed for beauty, but—for the heart of Lord Frederick; and if she could not succeed herself, she was anxious to prevent others from being more fortunate.

From the moment of Alicia's entrance, she had watched the countenance of Lord Frederick. At first, there was little seriously to alarm her; but the rapid change in his whole air and manner, when he heard that Alicia was leaving town the next day, could not have escaped a less vigilant observer. The keen eye of Lady Melrose watched the varying features of Lord Frederick, until their expression became no longer doubtful; then,

fearful of losing him entirely, she sprung forward, and threw her net around him—a net from which in vain he endeavoured to escape for the remainder of. the evening. When at last, with absolute incivility, he broke from her, and sought eagerly for his fair enchantress, she was gone! A thousand painful ideas arose when he discovered her departure. Was she ill, that she went thus early? was she piqued at the interruption in their conversation? was she, worse than all, thought the vanity of man, indifferent!

He was relieved from some of these alarms, by a lady regretting the early hours of the Countess of *******. "So barbarous of her," she continued, "to carry away poor Mrs. Clairville, who did not look as if she had the least fancy to be off." Lord Frederick breathed again; and, spite of his overpowering indolence, determined to be at Captain Neville's door before their departure on the morrow. Meanwhile, that gentleman had eagerly inquired of his daughter if she had seen Lord Frederick that evening, and the tone of despondency in which she replied, convinced him that all for the present was safe. Determining that, as far as it depended upon him, it should continue so, he ordered the carriage at five o'clock in the morning, and before six they were actually on their road, whither no one knew but Captain Neville.

Deep was the regret of Alicia, mingled with anxiety, for still she hoped. Her father judged differently, for he knew human nature: when her eloquent eyes no longer pleaded her cause, Lord Frederick would have leisure to reflect, and reflection he knew to be unfavourable to sc imprudent a match. As time passed on, it confirmed the opinion of Captain Neville, and lessened the hopes of his daughter. Meanwhile, at watering-places, where he delighted to show her, the peerless Alicia soon captivated all who beheld her.

Agreeable lovers, however, are more common th bearable husbands; and, although the widow might ha chosen from numbers, she saw none to shake her consta

cy to Lord Frederick; and even Captain Neville felt inclined to encourage but one, and that one soon lost his footing in that quarter, from losing his temper one night when his partner, Captain Neville, thought proper to revoke at whist.

Among the most impassioned admirers of the lovely widow, was a gentleman, whose perseverance surprised all who knew the parties; for Mrs. Neville hated him, her husband swore at him, Lucy quizzed him, and Alicia was coldly and distantly civil; for she feared, nay, almost disliked him, little as she was given to dislike any one. Captain De Lancy, nowise discouraged, overlooked Mrs. Neville; returned the satire of Lucy with wit as sportive, but more good-humoured; laughed at the oaths of her father, and persisted in being Alicia's shadow.

"Take my word for it, De Lancy," said one of his companions, "you are losing your time in that quarter. I have as good a chance of success."

"I do not doubt what your success might be, if you had my patience," calmly replied this persevering genius; and, in spite of laughter, ridicule, or discouragement, he never altered his course.

CHAPTER XI.

La constance des sages n'est que l'art de renfermer leur agi dans leur cœur.

Maximes de la Rochefouca

CAPTAIN DE LANCY was the younger son o Irish Baronet, but had quickly dissipated the for left him by his father, and had entered the army r late to begin a profession more influenced by the pro of rapid promotion, than by any natural inclinatic arms. Not that any one could venture to accuse bert De Lancy of wanting spirit: none could be qui at resenting an injury, real or imaginary; as nc could be more easily disarmed by gentleness or g osity in the supposed offender.

A strange compound of haughtiness and sensib his character was not easily ascertained, and nev be relied upon. He had all those nice and del feelings which enter with enthusiasm into excellence genius of every sort. He could be eloquent in praise of virtues he never practised; and no wond deceived others, since he completely deceived hin He could appreciate every thing noble, yet his conduct was often mean. He was not insincere, unsteady: he often *felt* rightly, but every feeling him was so evanescent, that it was not extraordi that he did not *act* rightly. Cheerful and good-nat he was courted by the young and the gay, alth less a favourite with the old and prudent. He less popular among men of his own standing, thought him pedantic, than with younger ones,

laughed at his wit, and overlooked his information. Yet this inconsistent being could lay plans, and adhere to them, when it was evidently his interest to do so.

His bold and aspiring temper loved to cope with difficulties; if he heard a thing was impossible, he became eager to achieve it, and generally succeeded; for what is impossible to the indefatigable! A passionate admirer of beauty, he no sooner beheld Alicia, than he acknowledged her superiority, and did homage to her charms. At first, he was content with admiring her; but the apparent impossibility of engaging her regard, piqued his pride. She was so unattainable, that to attain her, became the object of his life. Six months of ineffectual endeavours to that purpose had been expended, and Captain De Lancy began to despond—not indeed of making her his wife, for of that he was determined, but —of ever making her like him.

The Nevilles had grown accustomed to him, and were the more induced to tolerate him, on beholding the icy manner of Alicia, and the decided aversion of Lucy. "The man is disagreeable, to be sure," said the old lady, as she met with his name among some visiting-tickets; "but then, as the girls hate him, there is no particular harm done." Alicia thought there was no use in admitting a man at all, whom they all thought disagreeable; and Lucy voted *con amore* for his exclusion. Yet, somehow or other, he maintained his ground; and his versatile talents and general popularity seemed to make him a necessary feature in every assembly.

The young widow, in time, learned to fear him less, and even sometimes smiled at his lively sallies; but her indifference remained in full force, and her smiles proceeded more from good-breeding than merriment:—little, indeed, was Alicia inclined to mirth. Time passed on, but the remembrance of Lord Frederick did not pass with it. The more she felt of discomfort at home, the more frequently did her mind revert to the contrast, of what her situation would have been as the idolized

wife of Lord Frederick Sydney. The generosity an romance of her character prevented her pride from tal ing alarm at his neglect. She thought he must be right she thought herself unfortunate, but not ill-used; fc the last conversation, the last looks of her fashionab lover, were still present in her mind—foremost in h recollection. She felt she loved him; how, then, shoul she doubt his love for her? Nothing in her heart taugl her the possibility of inconstancy—of wavering attacl ments; and Alicia was not apt to judge harshly of otl ers. Yet, still she heard not of him, and her spiri became more constantly low, her nerves more irritabl

Her languid looks alarmed her sister, but even Luc did not guess that she suffered; for the sweetness Alicia was invariable, and her naturally strong min was little addicted to complaint. Evils that are certai and determined, the mind at once breaks under or ove comes: not so the sorrows that seem suspended over u which may fall or pass by, but over which we have r influence. We must look misfortune in the face, asce tain its extent, and feel its depth, ere we can know ho to bear it; suspense is to be endured only by those caln apathetic characters who have the power of forgettin its existence. That power did not belong to Alici and her fading bloom excited the indignation of h father. The terror of looking ill did not increase h beauty, and Captain Neville seriously reproached h for taking so little care of her only attraction.

He spoke with bitterness, for he was conscious of b ing unjust. Lucy's indignation was excited, and whe her father had left the room, she exclaimed, "Oh, m dear sister! if you have not spirit enough to resist t ranny, at least you can escape from it." Alicia shoo her head, with an air of so much despondency, that t quick-eyed De Lancy, who was present, easily pen trated her feelings. Rejoiced to find her rather prepo sessed in favour of another, than incapable of any pr ference, which he had begun to think must be the cas his next object was to discover who this favoured persc

was. Nor did this appear a difficult task, now he held the clue in his hand; for the young widow was artless by nature, and simple from purity of heart. Yet he failed in his endeavours to extract the secret from Alicia, in whose heart it was sealed with all the delicacy of feminine reserve; and from the volatile Lucy he could learn nothing, for she had no guess at her sister's thoughts.

An extra bottle of wine, however, rendered Captain Neville more communicative than prudent, and now the toils of De Lancy encompassed his victim. Alicia used to drive out in fine weather in an open carriage, not merely to enjoy, with her natural indolence, the soothing influence of the summer air, but also to take sketches, without fatigue, of some of the most admired landscapes, of which Nature had been liberal in that county. There was something in the fading glories of the sun particularly delightful to Alicia, whose taste was gratified by the rich and mellow tint thus cast on the scenery, and whose heart felt the better for the repose that succeeded it. In the stillness of the clear summer twilight, she sought for, and sometimes found, a temporary oblivion of the glare and wretchedness of day. Often however was she called upon to sacrifice this refreshing pleasure, and accompany Mrs. Neville on visits of ceremony, where the business of representation was supported more or less well by all whom she met.

She had one morning begged Lucy might take her place upon this occasion, for her spirits were unusually low, and she shrunk from playing her part in public. De Lancy, however, who had breakfasted with them, and had reasons for wishing Alicia to go, had the ingenuity to effect it without its appearing any thing more than one of Captain Neville's continual whims. This was no sooner decided, than he sought to delay their departure till the hour that suited him. That hour came, and he handed Mrs. Neville and the languid Alicia into their carriage, with a look of scarcely repressed triumph.

CHAPTER XII.

Ma chi può mai si ben dissimular gli affetti sui che gli asconda per sempre occhi altrui. METASTASIO.

ABOUT the time that De Lancy expected the return of the ladies, he contrived to give some employment to Captain Neville and Lucy, while he himself wandered about the Park-gates, sketching, with rather an unsteady hand, some of the oaks that had for centuries guarded them. He suffered the carriage to pass him, but he was at the door when it stopped, and one glance at the pale face of Alicia convinced him he had not planned in vain.

"I am so glad you are there!" exclaimed Mrs. Neville, for the first time in her life: "This poor child has been so ill—help her out, gently—send for the doctor. See, there! she will faint again!" and she did faint again; and remained so long insensible, that, alarmed beyond measure, De Lancy began to dread the shock had been greater than she could bear.

When, at last, she unclosed her heavy eyes, and felt her sister's tears fall on her face, and read on De Lancy's countenance sympathy with her sorrow, anxiety for her health, and all that tenderness her wounded spirit stood so much in need of, she smiled through her tears, as, in a scarce articulate voice, she said,

"Is there, indeed, any one that loves me? or is not every thing in this world treacherous and deceitful?"

"My sister!" exclaimed Lucy, in wondering distress. De Lancy could not speak, but he could kiss the cold white hand he held in his; and what at another

time she might have resented, the oppressed Alicia almost then felt grateful for.

The persevering lover of Mrs. Clairville had no sooner found, from the unconnected phrases of Captain Neville, that Lord Frederick Sydney had greatly admired his widowed daughter, than he immediately made inquiries into the character and mode of life of that young nobleman. Having learned that he was fond of flirting, in narrow circumstances, and dependent on a proud family, he felt pretty confident that he should be undisturbed by him.

As long, however, as Alicia had hopes, Lord Frederick was to be feared; and with no small delight, De Lancy heard that his marriage was fixed by his family, and agreed to on his part, on condition that his debts should be paid. This news he carefully kept from the ears of the young widow, willing that none of its effect should be lost by gradual preparation. Chance favoured his plan; for Lord Frederick, immediately after the ceremony, was to take his bride to a seat of his brother's, in the adjoining county, and their road lay directly past the house of Captain Neville.

On this road he met *her* he tried in vain to forget—not surrounded by pomp and flatterers, brilliant in beauty, and gilded with smiles, but—unattended, timid, and spiritless. The road was not wide, and Mrs. Neville's carriage stopped, to allow Lord Frederick's to pass. Alicia looked at it with an air of vacant curiosity; but her cheek flushed, and her heart beat, as one glance told her who was within. She bent forward, and, by an involuntary motion, held out her hand, as if to stop the horses. Lord Frederick started, and shrunk to the back of the carriage, not time enough to conceal himself, but so as to give a full view of his companion, who was slightly known to Mrs. Clairville.

A sudden terror chilled her frame; her eye followed the equipage; and her ear received with pain and wonder, Mrs. Neville's observations on its elegance: yet, though impatient and wretched, she refused to credit

what she could not but surmise. Every pulse beat in her aching breast, every fibre seemed in motion, yet she remained silent, and still strove to doubt.

They stopped at the turnpike, and Mrs. Neville's curiosity was soon satisfied; for the man who opened the gate told her, two out-riders belonging to the carriage which had just passed, were stopping there for a drink, and he would ask them their master's name; they had told him he was just married, and seemed proud of their gay favours. As he spoke, the men came out and mounted their horses. Alicia bent her earnest gaze on those fatal ribbons, which confirmed her direct apprehensions, when one of the men touched his hat to her, and she recognised with a thrill of anguish, the favourite servant of Lord Frederick. Hope was now indeed extinct:—hope, so long cherished, so fondly clung to, that it formed, as it were, a part of her existence. She neither spoke nor wept; but her heart withered, her soul was chilled, her languid blood ceased to circulate, and Mrs. Neville, in alarm and astonishment, supported the cold and senseless form of her darling child, without a guess at the cause of her disorder.

Her husband, to whom she related the occurrences of the morning, was not so blind; but while he regretted the illness of his daughter, he rejoiced in the cause, and already anticipated a journey to London, now this formidable Lord Frederick was removed.

CHAPTER XIII.

Incertum quo fata ferant.
Plus on aime une maîtresse, plus on est près de la haîr.
Maximes de la Rochefoucauld.

THE wandering spirits of Alicia became settled, but the fever on her mind was far from abating. She heard her mother talk over Lord Frederick's marriage, with Lucy; she remembered his look of alarm as he recognised her, and she inwardly determined he should never think she regretted him: she looked at her waning beauty, and thought in every line of her pale face her sorrow and its cause could be traced.

"*He*, at least, shall not guess it," thought she, as the tears of vexation and disappointment rolled off her cheeks. "I had his love once, and I will not have his pity now."

Poor Alicia! the sophistry of romance dictated your first marriage; sophistry, more reprehensible, perhaps more common, dictates your second! Yet, but for the conduct of her parents, neither would have taken place, and the happiness of *home* might have been known to one so worthy of it, so capable of appreciating it.

The second era of Mrs. Clairville's life drew nigh. The apparent devotedness of De Lancy, her eagerness to show she did not regret the desertion of Lord Frederick, and the misery of her life at her father's house, determined her fate. She gave her hand to a man she had never loved, whom she but endeavoured to respect, and she vainly fancied she had bettered her lot!

The parties did not ask Captain Neville's leave, because they knew they were not likely to obtain it; but Alicia had learned something, at least, of the ways of the world, and she was aware, that a rising young man of family and fortune, would be considered a very superior match to her first husband. How many sighs and tears, nevertheless, did she give to the memory of that husband, as she was about to unite herself to another! How often, from the bottom of her aching heart, did she say, "I shall never be loved as I have been." Alas! she was right, and for many a lingering year she felt she was so.

Captain Neville received Mrs. De Lancy and her husband with a sort of sullen discontent, which expressed itself more by silence than observations. Mrs. Neville stared and wondered, and repeated over and over again the same remarks, or rather the same words, on this, to her, unaccountable match. Lucy cried and laughed alternately; and knew not whether she most regretted parting with her sister, or rejoiced at seeing her released from bondage: for Lucy, young, fearless, and gay, looked on matrimony with no shrinking eye; she considered it not as the game where the stake can only be happiness or misery. "No; it was always a point gained *to be married:* if your husband was kind, well; if not, well too, for did you not get accustomed to it? and when one once knows a person's way, who would be fool enough to annoy themselves about it?" Thus thought Lucy, and thousands have thought and acted on the same plan. But thus did not Alicia think. She could love with all the energy of a lofty spirit; she could devote herself with all the enthusiasm of a generous woman, with all the tenderness of a delicate one. But what availed to her such powers? They must sleep, or start into momentary existence but to wound her, for who was there to call them into action?

A very short time after their marriage, De Lancy told his wife she must discard her extravagant notions, or get her father to feed them, for that the pay of an

officer could not go far in decking a spoiled beauty. Alicia wondered what had become of the private fortune she had heard of; but, at once generous and proud, she wondered in silence. She relinquished the ornaments her parents had covered her with, as unsuited to her present simple attire, and smiled with the disdain of conscious beauty as she felt she did not need them.

Never, indeed, had Alicia looked so well; never had her subduing loveliness been less obscured. No sparkling diamonds sought to deaden the brilliancy of her dark eyes; no flowers confined or concealed the rich luxuriance of her black tresses; no envious bandeau broke the line of beauty on her ivory forehead. There was a simplicity of gesture, a half-wild, half-sad, expression of countenance, that suited the rustic plainness of her dress. To the eye of taste, the wife of the poor officer was much more enchantingly beautiful, than the brilliant and idolized Mrs. Clairville, who counted Princes in her train.

In vain the belles of the county town where De Lancy was quartered cast off their fashionable head-dresses, and released their throats from the cumbrous and magnificent necklaces their grandmothers had bequeathed to them, they could not be like her whom they sought to imitate. When they perceived the experiment failed, they consoled themselves with ridiculing the bride, "who gives herself such airs of simplicity, just to show she may do any thing, for there was a time when nobody was so magnificent." Alicia heard these comments with indifference, or considered them as an homage to her charms. She had unhappily never been taught that, to have the consciousness of inferiority, in whatever way, forced upon us, is what we forgive with less ease than a real insult.

Satisfied that she would always be admired, she did not stop to consider whether she would also be popular. Indeed, of the advantages of popularity she had no notion. She had never, at any time of her life, stood in need of the kindness and protection of woman, and

it did not occur to her that she ever could. Thus she saw some women more frequently than others; she thought some more pleasant or more accomplished than their neighbours; but she formed intimacies with none. Some were formal by nature; others became so from envy of the superior attractions of the bride; some really only supposed her a vain beauty, and others thought of her but as another name to add to their visiting list.

Accustomed to the society of men of talents, who, for her former husband's sake, always treated her with esteem and cordiality, Alicia was spoiled for such society as this, and readily admitted the belief that all women were idle, censorious, and trifling. The employments of Mrs. De Lancy were sometimes frivolous, but she felt that her mind was not so; and she had little inclination to cultivate an acquaintance with those who, she saw plainly, did not understand her. Thus, when time taught the daughter of Captain Neville that she had rather a tyrant than a friend in her husband, she had no other to turn to.

Sometimes, the love of sympathy, so strongly implanted in our nature, induced Alicia to seek among those she saw most frequently, some similarity of taste or pursuit: she sung with one person; she drew under the eye of another; she walked with a third, to whom she could talk of the beauties of Nature, and be understood. She had never loved her husband much, yet his harshness disappointed her, and her spirits sunk in his society.

"You are pleased any where but with me," would Captain De Lancy often say; and she would see in the observation nothing beyond the ebullition of temporary anger. But it had a deeper source. Keen in feeling whatever related to himself, he was wounded beyond expression, to perceive how many avenues there were to her good-will, and that he had missed them all. To seek them now was impossible: the pride of man forbade his studying the disposition of his wife: besides,

she never appeared offended; she was always gentle and complying; and when tears would spring, she could wipe them away unperceived.

Had they lived quite alone, Captain De Lancy would have accustomed himself to her languid manner and tranquil countenance; but, surrounded by society, he sensibly felt the difference of her appearance, when some cheerful companions gave strength to her voice, and spirit to her eye. "She likes every one here better than me!" he would say to himself; and, miserable and irritable, he watched every one who approached her with painful suspicion. He was ashamed of acknowledging his jealousy, for he could not fix upon one person in particular.

Every one to whom, in the frank cordiality of her nature, Alicia extended the hand of friendship; every being on whom she smiled with pleasure, was alike hateful to her husband. His occasional rudeness to those whose society she preferred, or his peevish observations on them, surprised her, but did not lead her to guess his feelings. Often in company she affected more spirit than she felt, to cover her husband's inattention, and thus unconsciously aggravated his fretfulness. Others, however, were more quick-sighted; and many who felt the numerous fascinations of the bride, conceived hopes, from her husband's jealousy, that her own manner never would have given rise to.

Inured to admiration in every shape, and expresed in every possible way, she beheld without emotion, what would have surprised some, and dismayed others. There were limits, too, which no one ventured to pass in their declarations of passionate admiration. Some feared her almost childish simplicity would betray to her husband conversations to which she evidently attached but little consequence; some learned to know her better, and respect her more; and some were ambitious only of a little public notice from the fashionable beauty.

Once more Alicia found her only chance for amusement, her only refuge from oppression, lay in the haunts

of the idle and the dissipated. "The blessings of home, then, are for ever denied me," thought she, after confinement to the house for a slight indisposition had proved more irksome than usual; and in helpless sorrow she wept over a lot one vigorous effort might yet have improved. She was musing on the singular character of her husband, from whence her miseries sprung, when he entered. "I am going to the review, and I make it my request, that you admit no one during my absence. I do not like morning danglers." And, without waiting for a reply, he flung the door after him, and departed. "He might have made it more gently," thought she; but an idea of resisting it never occurred to her, and, ringing the bell, she gave orders accordingly.

Captain De Lancy returned not at the hour of dinner; and after waiting two hours, she ate her solitary meal, with a sensation of relief at being unrestrained by his presence. The soft breath of the evening invited her out; it was the hour she loved, and she yielded to its influence. She was seated on the smooth grass, her head rested against an aged oak, round whose stem crept the spiry eglantine and luxurious woodbine: lost in meditation less painful than usual, she heard not an advancing step till her husband stood before her, and, starting like one awoke from a dream, she uttered his name.

"Yes; it is I," said De Lancey sternly; "but it was not I whom you expected."

"Whom should I expect?" asked his astonished wife.

"Nay," said he, with a malicious laugh, "that you know best: but it won't do; trust me, lock and key could not guard you better than I do;" and he grasped her hand with savage force. Alicia looked up, and, faint as the twilight was, discovered by her husband's look and manner, that he was not sober. An emotion of disgust made her shudder, and she turned to the path leading home.

"You cannot avoid me, though!" said he triumphantly; and he walked by her, without releasing her hand. As they entered the house, the servant approached with a basket of fruit. "Mrs. Thornhill left this for you, Madam, and she was glad to hear you was sufficiently recovered to be out."

"She is very good," said Mrs. De Lancy, offering to take the fruit; her husband dashed the basket on the ground.

"I'll be d—d if you touch one, Madam!" he exclaimed; "don't I know who set her on to bring it you? It is her son's present, and you should eat poison first!"

"Surely," thought Alicia, "this is quite a new hatred to poor Thornhill!" but it was not the moment to reason, and she did not attempt it. In the drawing-room they found a note. De Lancy opened it with the eagerness of one who thinks he is making a discovery, and impatiently read aloud—

"'Lieut. Colonel Barham's respectful compliments to Mrs. De Lancy, and has the honour of enclosing the song she wished to have copied.' De Lancy glanced over the song; it was a simple Venetian ballad, in which nothing could be discovered beyond a pretty air. Half provoked and half relieved, he sneeringly observed, "So, you keep Colonel Barham to write music for you—an officer-like employment!"

A sudden remembrance of what he had formerly written out for his wife crossed him, and he added, "It is a very good *lover-like* employment, however, and has great success sometimes."

He turned to study Alicia's countenance, but she had quitted the room; and the next morning, when he became sensible of the unwary manner in which he probably had expressed himself, he watched with care for some change in his wife's manner to confirm or allay his suspicions. Meanwhile, Mrs. De Lancy dwelt with mingled anxiety and wonder on the turn of thought her husband had betrayed. In vain she repeated to herself,

"He knew not what he said"—still it left a vague un siness on her memory. The unsuspecting openness her nature had hitherto blinded her to what was evid to all others; besides, her pride revolted from the i of her husband placing so little confidence in her.

Jealousy was so contrary to her disposition, that tried not to see it, for she felt she should despise the p son capable of such a sentiment. Alicia was too li in the habit of reflection, to place herself often in situation of others accustomed to the tenderness o *certain* character on which, at all times, she could repo She was unfitted for sympathy with wild, irregular sta of passion, whose impetuosity disturbed, and wh harshness chilled her.

Certainly, Captain De Lancy loved her; but it with so much selfishness, and so much inconsistency, t it oftener shocked than gratified her. Much as her ligious feelings had been injured by the tenets and ample of Mr. Clairville, she yet possessed that hi toned morality which belonged to her cast of charact and which, though barren of comfort to herself, was without its advantages to others. Her duties, inde were rather felt than defined; but, such as they we she hesitated not to act up to them. She determin not to take any notice of his conduct, but carefully avoid giving rise to any of the feelings he had expr sed; yet, in doing so, she felt she should be awkwa for every species of management sat ill upon her. . .

CHAPTER XIV.

But endless is the list of human ills,
And sighs might sooner fail than cause to sigh.
Young's Night Thoughts.

ONE of the things that acted on the irritable nerves of Captain De Lancy, was his not rising as rapidly in his profession as he thought, and perhaps with reason, that he deserved to do. At last, he became Major; and the congratulations he received from his brother officers, the compliments that were paid to his talents, and, above all, the pleasure with which his wife appeared to receive them, produced at least temporary exhilaration. He knew Alicia incapable of deceit in the veriest trifle, and he enjoyed her present sympathy so much, that she almost reproached herself for not oftener feeling it.

Soon there arose another and a dearer cause of sympathy; and even Captain Neville condescended to be pleased at the prospect of embracing a grandchild. Lucy was suffered to visit her sister; and her constitutional gaiety, and real delight at escaping from home, quickly dispelled the gloom that once hung over Major De Lancy's household. There was so much affection in Alicia's temper, that she readily caught at the hope of comfort now held out to her. Yet a sentiment of profound melancholy mingled itself with maternal tenderness. It recalled too strongly all she had felt when last she expected to become a mother. When Lucy sought to make her look forward, she remembered the dreams

in which she had indulged in a similar situation, the voice that then soothed was hushed in silence, the eye that then encouraged "fires not, wins not now." Alicia wept, but it was alone; for she did not wish regret for the dead to be felt as a reproach by the living.

The hour of suffering approached;—Alicia's heart leaped with mingled anxiety and exultation, as the feeble wail of infant helplessness first met her ear. Slowly she recovered; but, inattentive to all, save the new claims upon her, and the new feelings to which they gave birth, she thought not of her own continued weakness. Major De Lancy liked children, and felt therefore gratified at his wife's devotion to the infant; but he soon wearied of confinement; and assured that he need be under no apprehensions for the invalid, he again mixed with the society which she was obliged to give up.

Mrs. De Lancy's spirits were lowered by bodily debility, and the departure of her beloved sister. She would not allow herself to dwell on her husband's neglect, but she wept over the cradle of her infant, and, pressing it closer to her bosom, consoled herself with the hope, that from him, at least, she might one day expect unbounded affection. Alas! poor Alicia! thy path was not doomed to be strewn with flowers. Many months had not passed over the infant's head, when his altered appearance alarmed the watchful mother. Three anxious nights she held him on her knees, and watched his feverish slumbers; but ere the fourth elapsed, the babe was at rest!

Mrs. De Lancy mourned in silence; for with the instinct of powerful feeling, she shrunk from displaying a sorrow, that, to others, must have appeared immoderate. "My boy could not be to any one what he was to me," she wrote to Lucy; and it was the only observation she made. She looked around her in vain for comfort or sympathy; and, in the first moments of anguish, she raised her thoughts to Him "who careth for every thing He hath made." It was the involunta-

ry appeal of weakness to strength—of earthly sorrow to heavenly care! But the firm trust in that care was wanting, and the consolation came not. She smiled in contempt at herself. "Oh! how idle," she exclaimed, "to expect Almighty Excellence should listen to a weak and erring mortal! Who am I, that I should be thought of in this vast creation?"

Thus did the tenets of Mr. Clairville exert their baneful influence over his hapless widow. She mourned as one without hope: adversity, therefore, could not improve and purify a mind thus distorted; it rather withered every amiable and blessed feeling, leaving her no other light to cheer her darkened soul than noisy merriment and heartless gaiety. To this she had recourse once more. It was in forgetting herself only, that she could feel the slightest pleasure in existence; and she mingled with the throng, not to gain ideas, but in the hope of losing them. She sought to drown the past, without expecting much from the future: she had but one object—to get over the present.

About this time, the Colonel of Major De Lancy's regiment joined them. He was a Baronet of large property, which his wife, a fashionable beauty, took care to diminish. There were few things Lady Lindamere prized so highly as popularity. To attract notice was her object; but whether by peculiarity of dress or manner, by superior beauty, superior wit, or superior extravagance, was a matter of comparative indifference. She wished both to dazzle and to please; and she was more than commonly fortunate, for she often succeeded in both.

What would have been ambition in a man, was in her a perpetual restlessness about petty objects, to be compassed by petty means. Of course, rivalry in any way was what Lady Lindamere could not endure; and she laboured to excel in so many ways, that no one at all distinguished above the common run of prettyish, pleasantish women, could escape her dislike. To lovely girls she was far more indulgent. However attractive,

they were always dependent; and she was jealous only of those who had nearly the same footing in society as herself. Sir Charles Lindamere had been long acquainted with Major De Lancy, but he never liked him, and the coldness was certainly equal on the side of the inferior officer.

Lady Lindamere heard, therefore, of Mrs. De Lancy, some time before she met with her; but, as Alicia was not particularly favoured among the women, and as the men knew better than to praise exquisite loveliness to one who had more pretensions to beauty than real possession of it, her expectations were not particularly raised. She heard of her merely as one whose health and spirits had hardly recovered from a bad confinement and the loss of her child; and, with much of compassion, and something of disdain, she ranked her with the more domestic wives of the other officers.

Nothing occurred to remove this impression for some time; for, fatigued with her journey, and having society at home, without the trouble of seeking it abroad, Lady Lindamere was some months in the vicinity of ——— before she appeared in public. A ball was at last given by the officers to their Colonel, and her Ladyship could not but be present. Aware that she was naturally the first person at this ball, she omitted no magnificence of attire, no newness of fashion, to give *eclat* to her appearance. After having delayed the dancers *more* than a reasonable time, Sir Charles and Lady Lindamere arrived. Her Ladyship spoke to every one with her wonted grace and courteousness: something there was, perhaps, of *protection* in her manner, but it was overlooked in favour of her marked attention.

Major De Lancy's distant bow did not repel any one determined to be pleased; her Ladyship beckoned him to approach, asked after his wife, and begged to know why he had so long delayed bringing them acquainted. "Mrs. De Lancy is here," coldly replied her husband, "and I shall be happy to introduce her to your Ladyship."

"We will seek her together," said Lady Lindamere, in her very best manner, laying her fair hand on the scarce offered arm of De Lancy. They entered the inner apartment, and Lady Lindamere instantly exclaimed, "What a beautiful girl that is! Can you tell me whose daughter she is?"

De Lancy's proud spirit exulted in the involuntary tribute of admiration; but, with unalterable frigidity of manner, he answered—"She is *my* wife."

In the first emotion of surprise, Lady Lindamere withdrew her hand from the arm on which it rested; and her voice almost faltered, as she asked if he were serious. Immediately, however, she recovered herself, and telling him, with forced gaiety, he must have made the whole county envy him, approached Mrs. De Lancy with as much suavity of manner as she could assume. Alicia received her advances with more real good breeding than the Lady possessed who made them. Mild from nature, serene from indifference, highly polished from early introduction to the best society, Mrs. De Lancy was, without effort, a woman of fashion.

Lady Lindamere did but labor to be what she instantaneously felt Alicia was. All this was dreadful, and the more so, from being quite unexpected. To be eclipsed where she had anticipated nothing but the fatigue of continual homage, was too mortifying; and she felt she could never forgive the wife of De Lancy the charms she possessed, or the admiration they excited. She retreated as quickly as possible from an introduction so replete with vexation; but, as she was making her parting courtesy, Sir Charles approached, and, with a look of unequivocal expression at the peerless Alicia, begged, as his wife had been beforehand with him, to introduce himself to Mrs. De Lancy. Lady Lindamere bit her lip, and turned haughtily away; but felt something like relief, as she glanced at the gloomy countenance of De Lancy.

"Admirable!" thought she; "he pays the penalty of having won so fair a prize;" her beauty will not save

her from her husband's anger, and I may add to her comfort by engrossing *him*;" and, with this benevolent intention, she contrived to keep him constantly near her, enjoying his impatience and inattention, and aggravating them by observations on his wife's irresistible attractions, their evident effect upon Sir Charles, and her own contempt of jealousy.

De Lancy was stung to the quick; yet he had penetration enough to see Lady Lindamere's object, and that she was far from being as tranquil as she tried to appear. He rallied in his turn; talked of the numerous conquests Alicia always made, as if he shared the triumph; spoke much of her excessive sweetness, which he attributed to her consciousness of being *unique*, nowhere to be surpassed. Lady Lindamere shivered in every vein; vowed vengeance against De Lancy and his wife; and when they parted, they had the satisfaction of reflecting, that every effort of human ingenuity had been called into play to torment each other.

Alicia and her new admirer separated with very different feelings. The voice of adulation, the look of admiration, common as they were to Mrs. De Lancy, were not without their charm; novelty, too, had its advantages, for it carried with it a feeble excitement to relieve the dulness of life. Sir Charles, on his side, was intoxicated by a blaze of beauty so little expected, and exhausted himself in praising the fair possessor to his wife, who heard him in sullen silence, with the secret but unalterable resolution never to suffer her to divide with herself the tribute of admiration.

CHAPTER XV.

Hard is the forrune that your sex attends!
Women, like Princes, find few real friends!

LYTTLETON.

THE ease with which Mrs. De Lancy had relinquished society, while there was any thing to bind her to home, had for a moment allayed all the feverish alarms of her husband; but once more she was "the admired of all admirers," and once more he became a prey to the feelings that had embittered the early months of their union. This time, however, he sought to disguise them; for Alicia did not now shun him as she had been wont; and he feared to alienate her, by betraying the impetuosity of his temper. He seized, therefore, with eagerness an opportunity of greater retirement, which offered itself in an invitation from Captain Neville.

Alicia would rather have remained where she was; but, as Major De Lancy seemed so much to wish spending a little time with her father and mother, and as she knew the comfort her presence was to her sister, she was far from objecting to what she could not help considering as a whim in her husband, who never liked any of the family, and therefore, she thought, could hardly derive much satisfaction from visiting them. They went, however; and his leave of absence was prolonged from time to time; for Captain Neville was not absolutely rude to him, and was kinder to his daughter than she herself expected.

Some, if not all, of Major De Lancy's motives in this protracted visit were easily divined. His father-in-law was evidently declining; and from the comfort, almost amounting to splendour, in which he lived, his income was supposed to be large; and, as he had but two children, he would hardly, at his death, overlook his eldest. Not that Major De Lancy loved money—he was rather profuse than narrow, and was never known to value any one merely for his acres. He was no otherwise interested than a selfish person must ever be, who, conscious of the importance others attach to wealth, takes all means, neither very troublesome, nor quite dishonourable, to acquire it.

Whispers he had certainly heard of Captain Neville's fortune being by no means equivalent to the show he contrived to make. But these whispers he attributed to envy; for his father-in-law was a regular man, never in debt, and never spoke of money in the querulous tone so many adopt that wish for more. Besides, a ship had lately reached England, of which Captain Neville's share was known to be twenty thousand pounds, and this sum De Lancy was aware had been received. That Alicia had been given nothing on her marriage did not surprise him, as the match was none of her father's choosing; but that she should be *left* nothing, was what her husband did not suppose possible.

The almost sudden death of Captain Neville put an end to these speculations. He suffered much from the gout, which at last flew to his stomach. Immediately on perceiving his danger, he sent for Mrs. De Lancy, who was unhappily from home, expressed great impatience and anxiety to see her, and, on feeling himself grow rapidly worse, appeared to wish for power to explain something to his youngest daughter. But that power was denied him; and when Alicia arrived he was speechless, and his faculties impaired. He expired shortly after; but every endeavour to find a will proved abortive.

He left neither debts nor money; and his widow and children, on whom no settlement had been made, were beggars by his death. In vain Mrs. Neville observed, that he had always given her money whenever she asked for it, and therefore he could not have died insolvent;—in vain De Lancy endeavoured to trace the sums he knew the deceased to have received; they had been placed in no bank; and if Captain Neville had (as many thought) a secret hoard, it was never discovered by any of his family.

The house, furniture, plate, carriages, and horses, were sold, and the money sunk in an annuity for Mrs. Neville; which, together with the trifle allowed to the widow of an East India captain, was all that now remained to an aged woman of feeble intellect, and a thoughtless girl, who had never known the want of money, or its value. De Lancy was at first too much occupied with wonder and commiseration to think much of himself; but when once his mother-in-law was settled, with Lucy, in tolerable comfort, in a cottage belonging to a relation in Devonshire, he had leisure to dwell on his own disappointment. It did not sweeten his temper, nor did the whole transaction enliven the oppressed Alicia. To share poverty with one we love, is hardly a misfortune; there is hope for the future, and affection for the present. Alas! there was neither for her, and bitterly she felt there was not. She was uncomfortable at expending ever so small a sum that might abridge the few gratifications her husband was accustomed to: she asked for a few shillings with the consciousness of a culprit, received them with downcast looks, and sighed, as she counted them over, to think how soon the same painful feelings must recur.

De Lancy joined his regiment; but not being able to take an entire house, announced to his wife that they must lodge in the barracks. "The apartments for the officers," he added, on perceiving her look of dismay, "are not bad, and we cannot afford to be fine."

"This is a convenient word," thought Alicia; "it applies to every thing.—Grant, Heaven! it may not apply in time to eating with knives and forks, in preference to fingers."

To the barracks accordingly they went. The apartments were damp; and a rheumatic attack confined De Lancy to his room, where Alicia was necessarily a prisoner. The employment, however, was not quite useless to her, for it prevented her dwelling on the many unpleasant circumstances attending their new abode.

Her husband could now walk about; but he had an inflammation in his eyes, which prevented his employing himself. Alicia then was to read to him; Alicia was to write for him; and Alicia was unhappily not accustomed to do either, so that both were a penance. Still she performed them without a murmur; but the fatigue a child undergoes at the hardest task was nothing to hers. The child looks forward to its ending, and has perhaps a latent trust in the indulgence of its masters; but Mrs. De Lancy's task had no end, nor her master's indulgence any beginning.

The books she now read were such as she had never seen, which often she could not comprehend, and from which she could never derive amusement, even when she did comprehend them. Hour after hour did the soft murmur of her voice float on the still air of their apartments, and, reaching the ears of the officers in the mess-room below, excite their wonder at her perseverance, and their indignation at her continued confinement. Seldom, however, was any opportunity given them of expressing their feelings; for De Lancy scarcely suffered his wife to quit him, or, when in his presence, to enter into any conversation with any one who visited him.

Those whose attentions to Alicia had been most marked, were of course proportionably obnoxious to De Lancy; and to these she was now forbidden to speak. All this was so strange and wonderful to her, that she voluntarily secluded herself, lest meeting with these

people should place her in a predicament, the awkwardness of which would be at once painful and ludicrous. Lady Lindamere had taken no farther notice of one she idly thought her rival. But Sir Charles had not been so remiss, although it required some dexterity to invent excuses to himself for conduct so senseless, and in which so little gratification could be found, beyond gazing on his fair idol.

Her powers of conversation seemed to have abandoned her—even her countenance was mute; and those large, eloquent eyes, bent on her work, scarcely were suffered to glisten through their dark fringes, while she returned his salutation. If he had the vanity to enjoy the jealousy he created, he had not the temper to endure quietly the haughty manner in which an inferior officer treated him, or, indeed, the observations of his wife, who, far from happy at perceiving how large a portion of his thoughts the beautiful Alicia engrossed, took care to exasperate him against De Lancy.

To produce this effect, much talent was not necessary, although much was displayed. Sir Charles listened with greedy ears to accounts prejudicial to the man he hated in his profession; and, forgetting how liable his own conduct was to censure, secretly determined to bring forward publicly against De Lancy charges he might find it difficult to refute. Time passed on meanwhile, and Alicia became reconciled to her Egyptian bondage.

There had been days when half her sources of misery would have furnished matter for many a bitter rumination; but there are blessings in constant employment, however little that employment may be suited to our taste, which can be duly appreciated only by the unhappy. She laboured during the day, and slept without vapours during the night. She had not *time* to say "How miserable I am!" and often as she felt it, the feeling quickly gave place to some other. She possessed, too, that sort of pliability of character, which adapts itself to circumstances, and which ever wishes to

find something to approve, if not to love. She had now the means of judging of her husband's disposition, as far as so eccentric a thing could be judged of. She saw, indeed, much to wonder at, something to condemn, but also something to admire.

His talents appeared the more splendid to her, from being unlike what she had been accustomed to. His knowledge upon any subject fitted to her capacity he was willing to communicate, and she felt gratified by the communication. When she saw him dictating some political pamphlet with the same ease with which she wrote a familiar note; stretching some landscape that would have engrossed all her powers of mind, whilst listening to some of the gravest, and, as she thought, dullest books, which, by his comments, it was evident he both heard and understood; Alicia imbibed not only a sort of reverence for his abilities, but a strong feeling of humility. She attributed her different disposition to native inferiority to her husband; she admired his energy and keenness, as much as she deplored her own languor and inertness; but she did not consider how many motives for exertion De Lancy had which had never been hers; and looking upon indolence as a constitutional defect, she made no effort to throw it off.

To education in general, whether bestowed by parents or by circumstances—whether that of instructors or of life, (the greatest of all instructors,) she had never directed a thought. The errors and misfortunes of *her* education escaped, therefore, undetected, and consequently unrectified. A less generous mind might perhaps have been induced to feel envy of superior attainments in a person they could hardly be said to love; but such a feeling was foreign to Alicia's nature, and she rather became proud of them. Efforts of display, indeed, were not in her way; she could not do it for herself, or learn to do it for her husband; but no opportunity that naturally occurred, did she suffer to pass, without, when propriety and delicacy warranted, marking her sense of her superiority.

The observations this excited were numerous, and not at all charitable. It was thought hypocritical by many, unnatural by all. To be simply obedient, was very interesting; but this spontaneous tribute of respect to so harsh a husband was not called for, and looked, they thought, like servility. It is singular that the world in general are admirers of submission only while they fancy it to be an effort in the yielding party: once proved to be natural, or suspected to proceed from the infatuation either of tenderness or terror, they view it with wonder not unmixed with contempt.

It would seem as if we could never thoroughly sympathize with those who yield, unless feeling lends a grace to humility, or sorrow gives it a shade of dignity. We revolt from slaves who dance in their chains; and, on the same plan, we feel impatient when we see our neighbours kiss the rod which our hearts tell us *we* should spurn. When the efficacy of Christianity becomes powerful among us, so as in reality to work that change in our habitual feelings we so seldom suffer it to do, our conceptions of the merits and the duties of submission may be different; but *to resist* will ever be the first impulse of our *nature;* and, consequently, our sympathy with those who yield, when from no very evident or great motive, will ever be small.

CHAPTER XVI.

"E fornito 'l mio tempo a mezzo gli anni."

THE time at last arrived which was to prove to Major De Lancy that, though it is easy to have many friends, without deriving any particular benefit from them, it is scarce possible to have an enemy, without sustaining some injury from him. If the opportunities of doing good are much more frequent than those of doing evil, the advantage is more than counter-balanced by the evanescent nature of good, and the trifling degree in which it can be performed by the most zealous friend; whilst, on the contrary, there is hardly a grievance inflicted by an enemy, the pain of which does not survive his anger, nay, often his very existence. It was an evil of this sort which, from trifling motives, and a train of feelings scarce discernible to himself, Sir Charles Lindamere was preparing to inflict on Major De Lancy.

When Alicia first heard her husband was summoned to a court-martial, to answer to charges preferred against him by Sir Charles Lindamere, her astonishment knew no bounds. The wish to injure was always incomprehensible to her, and to injure those you were in the habit of seeing, and for one of whom, at least, the fondest admiration had so often been expressed, was so strange as scarcely to be believed. Although her husband showed anger unmixed with surprise, she still felt confident there must be some mistake, if not in the fact, at least in the person bringing it forward. With this impression, she hesitated not to address Sir Charles, whom by accident she met at a cottage, the owner of

which furnished them with milk. His embarrassed manner gave her uneasiness; but shaking it off, she attempted to smile, while she spoke of the vexation that had arisen, which a little time, she hoped would end.

"Your name," she added, with hesitation, "has been made use of, doubtless, as a matter of form?"

"If it gives you so much concern," returned Sir Charles, "I shall regret being the ostensible person in this business; but surely," he added, with a look of freer admiration, "you only think it proper to speak thus—all lovely, all enchanting as you are, you cannot regret giving up a husband who would doom such beauties to wither in confinement and solitude."

Like a sudden ray of light darting through the gloom, and illuminating objects we had previously imagined to ourselves as totally different, were these words on the mind of Mrs. De Lancy: so many things of which she never dreamed were implied in them. That he *was* the person who had brought this upon them; that he expected it would destroy her husband; and that, when blighted in fame, and ruined in fortune. he farther expected she would abandon him! It was not often that indignation painted with its burning colours the soft cheek of the placid beauty; but he had roused the spirit within, which often slumbered, but never could become extinct, and every feature shone with the sudden illumination.

Struck by an expression so unusual, Sir Charles drew back. "I did not expect—" he began, but a smile of scorn checked his words.

"You need not explain, Sir," said Mrs. De Lancy, with quickness, "that we have mistaken one another. I did not indeed know *you*, and you have yet to know *me*;" and haughtily she turned from him, nor did he venture to follow her steps.

When the first emotion had subsided, Mrs. De Lancy persuaded herself that Sir Charles's information could not be correct, and that it was impossible her husband could merit the punishment he seemed to anticipate.

"These attacks surely," thought she, "are the effects of malevolence: no one can believe them. How could he have preserved so high a character for integrity and honour, if but the very suspicion of such charges had fallen upon him?" She made no inquiries upon the subject, for she did not wish to teaze him; and she could not allow others to believe she had any doubt of his innocence.

De Lancy, meanwhile, laboured indefatigably to produce proofs in his favour; and Alicia would not suffer her mind to rest on the suspicious circumstance of his ceasing to employ her. He did not allow any one but himself to copy out the most trifling paper; yet, though harassed and anxious, he was less harsh to his wife than usual, for he was gratified by the delicacy with which she forebore the slightest allusion to the circumstance, and the quiet but constant attention she showed to him.

The court-martial took place; the charges were fully proved, and Major De Lancy broke! The news was unannounced to Alicia, but she read it on the agonized countenance of her husband. Then he was guilty!—A deadly sickness seized her, and she hastily averted her eyes, lest she might seem to reproach him. He seated himself by her with affected calmness: he tried to speak, but it was only a convulsive effort: he took her hand, it was cold and almost lifeless; he drew aside the veil that shaded her face; her eyes were closed, her very lips white. "And this too I was born to bear," thought he, vehemently starting from his seat, and covering his face with his hands. "She does not comfort me; she mourns my degradation."

Alas! to the self-accusing spirit, all is misery and insult! They quitted their habitation; and though the feelings with which Alicia entered it were not enviable, those she now endured were infinitely more bitter. When Mr. Clairville had overturned all from which she derived religious support, he had, in their place, substituted the idol Honour. Lending to others that simpli-

city and purity of feeling that belonged to herself, she shrunk from the eye of every casual observer.

Previous to their departure, accident threw in her way one female acquaintance, who, shocked at the suffering legibly portrayed in the beautiful face of Mrs. De Lancy, by a spontaneous impulse of sympathy, held out her hand, and offered her services with equal warmth and sincerity. Unexpected kindness will often fall upon some sensitive chord that lies buried in the heart, and appear rather to pain than to soothe. Alicia burst into tears, at once astonished, oppressed, and overcome.

De Lancy tried to lose the bitterness of thought in preparations for revenge. That was not difficult to effect; and the court-martial on Major De Lancy was still the news of the day, when one was held on Colonel Sir Charles Lindamere, the result of which was similar to the former one. The loss, indeed, was not equal to the Baronet, whose property, influence, and connexion, redeemed his name from more than momentary censure; whilst the inferior officer, on the contrary, lost a great part of his income, and much of his personal consequence.

The painful consciousness that at first oppressed Alicia wore off, in a great measure, as she saw how differently others viewed the circumstances that had taken place. At first, she felt excessive sympathy for Lady Lindamere, whose feelings, she supposed, must be much like hers, aggravated by the reflection that Sir Charles's character had been attacked in consequence of his seeking to sully that of another. But soon she found Lady Lindamere's routs in town were as fashionable as ever, and that she herself was unbroken in health or spirits. When first she discovered how much more lightly this misfortune sat on Sir Charles than on her husband, she guessed at the reasons with a sort of proud gratification.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "if poverty be the only ignominy, all is yet well; such contempt I can bear;"—and with re-awakened spirits Alicia prepared to perform all the duties that fall to the lot of a poor man's wife.

There was little in the very limited society they now entered into, to excite the jealousy of De Lancy; and though occasional sparks of a flame, smothered rather by circumstances than reflection, would burst forth, it was nothing like the continual fever and restlessness under which he had laboured at the commencement of their marriage.

Alicia hailed the change with real pleasure. Conscious of strictly fulfilling every duty, cheerfully sustaining every privation of her present situation, she felt deserving of a confidence she imagined, at last, she had acquired. She was yet to learn that her husband was less harsh, because he was more indifferent; less bent upon watching her, because he had other pursuits. Generous, open, and unsuspecting, these illusions long soothed her; and, when circumstances became too glaring to escape her notice, she wept in secret, and laboured to persuade herself he was less wrong than he appeared, or that it could occur no more.

If there were many instances in which the want of female counsel had been a real loss to Alicia, it was in this instance doubtless a blessing. No female friend indignantly set forth the intrigues of De Lancy, taught his wife what she wished not to learn, and inspired resentment where she only felt regret. Too proud to complain, the lines of her expressive countenance would quickly have been scanned by the eye of affection; and the extorted confession that she was miserable, would but have doubled that misery.

If no one shared her sorrow, none aggravated it. She loved not to dwell upon the consolation—but still it was one—that the ties which bound her to her husband were those of habit and duty, rather than of tenderness: neglect, therefore, was nothing; not even her pride shrunk from it, for there were none to witness it. His conduct was doubtless not respectable; and she hoped, therefore, it might remain unknown: but she knew well the careless eye with which the world looks on actions of this nature, and how venial such sins appear to almost all those who do not suffer from them.

CHAPTER XVII.

Without tranquillity there can be no enjoyment; and where there is perfect tranquillity, there is scarce any thing which is not capable of amusing.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiment.*

MOST of Mrs. De Lancy's hours were now spent in solitude, and there was a time when this solitude would have appeared irksome; but to those who have suffered, the mere absence of ill is positive enjoyment.

She was still young, very young, to have endured so much; and, although neither strong nor active, well enough in health to derive a physical pleasure from mere existence. If allowed to inhale in peace the first breath of spring, to cultivate her early flowers, or transport herself in imagination to some fair scenes of which poets dream, Alicia felt little inclined to quarrel with life. Certainly she possessed few of the things supposed to conduce to happiness. In the whole universe there was but one heart on which she ventured to lean, and that was Lucy's. Her sister was, however, far less affectionate from nature than herself; but she was never unkind or ungrateful, and Alicia's affection remained, of course, unchecked.

There are some minds who find so much luxury in loving, that they scarcely ask if the sentiment be reciprocal—the feeling is its own reward. Thus it was with Mrs. De Lancy: the comfort and happiness of Lucy was her first object in life; but she was aware that the difference of age, as well as other circumstances, prevented Lucy from feeling equally anxious about her. The die too, in one instance, was cast. For *her* there

was nothing more to expect, but little, alas! to hope, and much beyond what she had already felt, to fear. Her path was marked out, and she had but to cherish the few flowers that grew there, and walk over the thorns as though she felt them not. But Lucy's lot was unfixed. It could hardly be painful as her sister's, for there was a force of gaiety about her that repelled sorrow, and it might easily be more brilliant. Oh! how earnestly did Mrs. De Lancy hope that it might! "Would," thought she, "she might one day meet with tenderness such as I have experienced; yet, no;—such watchful love might be a restraint to her independent spirit; costly ornaments, magnificent apparel, would be useless to her. She is not beautiful enough to attract in a crowd, and she might there lose her wonted vivacity."

The longer Alicia mused, the more she discovered that her style of happiness would be unfitting to Lucy; but she was comforted by the reflection that, if there were a few situations in which her sister's enjoyment would fall short of hers, there were millions in which she would find or make a happiness, of which Alicia was incapable. "We must trust to chance," she would say, and sighed as she thought of the blind deity to which she committed her darling sister.

Lucy, in the meantime, was not at all to be pitied. The first shock over, occasioned by their change of circumstances, she looked forward with the cheerful improvidence of youth. At first, she was almost out of temper at the size of their new apartments. She complained she could not move in them, or breathe in them. In common with many a spoiled daughter of luxury, she was annoyed at many things that did not, in fact, inconvenience her; but which, from not being used to, she looked upon as emblems of poverty.

Lucy had little beyond bare privation to break her spirits: she saw no change in her mother—heard from her no repining. The quiescent spirit of Mrs. Neville soon reconciled her to the loss of luxuries of a more ex-

tensive society, and of greater consequence. Her regret scarcely outlived her wonder of their altered circumstances. Though death must ever be a melancholy event, and though the death of those with whom we live naturally creates some alarm about our own existence, the loss of Captain Neville could not be called a misfortune to his wife, nor did she affect to consider it as such; although, in common with most widows, she talked of *poor dear* Captain Neville, with the look of gravity and the accent of grief.

To be no longer subject to the fretful impatience, and sometimes coarse abuse of her husband, was doubtless a relief. Although long habit and inattention broke much of the force of those evils while they existed, to be without them naturally inspired her with more cheerful content; and she would sit day after day in her armchair, and require no other amusement than the consciousness of quiet. The attendance she needed was so little as not to confine her daughter, who, fearless and uncontrolled, wandered about the romantic country they now inhabited, without exciting her mother's curiosity or her neighbours' comments. The love of liberty was as strongly marked in Lucy as the willingness to yield was in her sister; she had too as indefatigable a thirst for knowledge, and as eager a curiosity about all things that could be known, as, in early life, her father had possessed: but there was none to direct aright this disposition; so that she did little but bewilder herself in desultory studies, that impatience and volatility quickly made her renounce.

The retirement in which they lived was so complete, that when De Lancy and his wife quitted them, they calculated the time when they should see them again, and referred every thing to that joyful period. Mrs. Neville indeed, in whose memory dates had a great difficulty in fixing themselves, generally expected them on the morrow; but when that morrow came, she felt no disappointment, for she was no nearer to her imaginary day, which was but something *after* the present. Her origi-

nal dislike to De Lancy had long worn off; but her love for Alicia, amid the ruin of opinions, sentiments, and intellect, remained unshaken, and flourished in her heart with the strength of maternal tenderness. Then there were so many little attentions, so many tender cares, Alicia could pay, that her younger sister hardly saw, or, seeing, did not observe. Mrs. Neville, indeed, did not attribute to this her preference for Mrs. De Lancy, or hardly was conscious that she felt any; but, in the absence of her daughters, she inquired not for Lucy; she missed her not; her solicitude was for Alicia; and she hailed her on her return, with the pleasure of one who scarce expected to see her more.

Of all the strong feelings nature had bestowed upon Alicia, none was more powerful or invariable than gratitude. To her mother this sentiment therefore was dedicated, and she felt also for her the compassionate interest we have for helplessness, not wholly unmixed with consolation, on perceiving what various evils she thus avoided. But it was Lucy who was her idol; she rejoiced in her versatile powers, as if they reflected honour on herself. She thought there was nothing too great for her to achieve,—nothing too good for her to expect.

Lucy returned her affection, though with less pride and no enthusiasm: she derived, indeed, a sort of pleasure from her sister's beauty, but it was only while she saw it admired. Alone with her, she scarce observed it, and almost marvelled it should influence others so much. If she appeared among numbers, Lucy was again astonished at her exquisite loveliness, and wondered at herself for feeling it only as it were by comparison. If any thing like vexation checked the high spirits of Lucy, it was to her sister she flew, secure of indulgence and consolation; but for mere society, she would rather seek De Lancy. If she wanted information, he could give it; if she wanted amusement, his lively conversation furnished it; if she wanted a companion in her adventurous rambles, he was ready to accompany her, and

extricate her from any embarrassment in which her heedlessness involved her. The quickness and forwardness of his manner, which had provoked her at first, no longer struck her upon greater intimacy; besides that, he paid her more attention than formerly. She was less of a child, and he had become her brother. He was not engrossed with his wife, and had leisure to amuse himself with the merry prattle of her sister. Her spirits were a relief to the languor of Alicia; while her impatience of control, and want of peculiar elevation of sentiment, made him rejoice in Mrs. De Lancy's dissimilarity to her.

It was when visiting in the lowly cottage to which Mrs. Neville was now reduced, that her eldest daughter spent more peaceful hours than she had ever expected would fall again to her lot: her husband appeared more amiable while ministering to the comfort of those she loved, and apparently wishing for no other society.—They were near the sea, and De Lancy had a sailing-boat, which was a greater delight to Lucy than to Alicia. There was one luxury, however, equally enjoyed by all. Lucy had more knowledge of music, though perhaps less taste, than her sister; and she would carry her harp on a fine summer evening to a romantic situation in the cliffs, which she called her seat, where its fine tones re-echoed from rock to rock, and died on the shore.

Their cottage itself was surrounded by rock, and embosomed in verdure and foliage. Their little garden, at the back, was the most productive in the neighbourhood; and the Argyleshire rose almost excluded the light from their laticed windows. It was indeed one of those enchanting spots, of which one might say with the first poet of our age, "And *all* save the spirit of man is divine!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ah, but thou must!
Thou must speak that which, in its darkest hour,
Push'd to extremity midst ringing dizziness,
The ear of desperation doth receive,
And I must listen to it!

Baillie's Plays.

MRS. DE LANCY had generally preferred spending the summer season in Devonshire, but she entered with alacrity into her husband's plan of renting a cottage in her mother's immediate vicinity for a whole year. Although, from economy and choice, Mrs. and Miss Neville had little society, it was easy to procure more in the neighbouring town, which, at particular seasons, was famed for its gaieties.

It was a scheme that, in every point of view, afforded pleasure to Alicia; and she prepared for her journey, in a frame of mind more similar to her sister's than to her own. It was the nature of Alicia to repose on the present, without investigating the future; but she had latterly been forced to alter this method. It was so seldom possible to extract any thing pleasurable from the present, that she had learned to look forward; and never had she done so with greater hope than at this moment. She felt that her acquaintance in general, from not really knowing her, had little sympathy with her; and she was thrown, therefore, more into the bosom of her own family. From them she looked for every comfort;—poor Alicia! it was from them she was to experience every misery! When Mrs. Neville was told her

daughter was to be near her a whole twelvemonth,—that every day she was to see her, the assurance seemed to diminish her infirmities, and almost to renovate her existence. Lucy, too, was wild with spirits; so many things she could not do alone, so few things *even she* could enjoy alone! The year opened to them all under the fairest auspices;—alas! it was far from ending as it had begun.

The summer had passed to Mrs. Neville and Alicia with mutual pleasure. If the feelings of the other two partook sometimes of greater happiness, they at times bordered on a depth of misery unknown to the placid beauty or her venerable parent. Under her sister's protection, Lucy partook of some of the winter's amusements at E——. She was fond of dancing, and her light, graceful figure particularly fitted her for the exercise. Alicia contrived to give her this pleasure frequently; and often have even encomiums on her own beauty passed unobserved, as her eye followed down the dance the flitting form of the being most dear to her.

As the winter advanced, it annoyed her to perceive that her sister's good looks were fading, and that her figure lost much of its slimness and elasticity. Her spirits too were unequal, and she declined leaving home. Mrs. De Lancy, whose exquisite taste had often been a matter of envy to her rivals in charms, now exerted it but little on herself; but she delighted in fancying new dresses for her sister. At first, Lucy wore them with thankfulness; but now she complained of suffering from cold, and wore nothing but a loose dark dress fastened round her throat.

"I cannot bear," said her sister to her one day, "to see you neglect yourself so much. I know my mother's family are all large, so I do not wonder at your growing so; but you might look better, and at your age you ought to do so."

"Oh, it will do well enough now," said Lucy, in a rapid manner, and scarce articulate voice; "when the weather is warmer, I can dress differently."

The weather did become warmer, but Lucy was as chilly as ever, and Alicia wondered at what she thought quite an infatuation. A glimpse of the truth could not darken a mind so pure. How indeed could the most credulous and confiding of mortals dream of injury from those nearest her? De Lancy knew that suspicion was foreign to her nature; it was not *that* he dreaded. That a mind so capable of acts of depravity should yet possess sparks of generosity, was wonderful, but not less true. It has been said, that to conceive magnanimity, there must be some trace of it in the mind that could appreciate it; if so, perhaps even De Lancy was not without greatness of mind; for certain it is, he reckoned firmly upon that of his wife. She had for some weeks observed in him symptoms of agitation that moved her wonder; but she had at last forborne to soothe him, when she found the effort was most unsuccessful. She was too delicate to make any inquiry, but he looked wretched, and she was gentle and benevolent enough to sympathize with sorrow, although she guessed not at its source.

One day that she was working by the window, pondering over the various circumstances from which her husband's uneasiness could arise, and finding none at all adequate to the effect, she was startled by a sigh so deep from him, that she involuntarily laid down her work, and gazed at him. He was leaning back in his chair: one hand rested on an open book, from which his ideas had appeared to wander far; the other supported his head, and cast a shadow over features working with "feelings deep and undefined." Suddenly, he smote his hands together, and, starting up, approached her with a sort of desperate effort. He paused, as wanting courage to speak first. He leaned against the window-frame and averted his face.

"What *can* be the matter with you?" asked Mrs. De Lancy. "I have seen you suffer before, but I never saw you thus."

"There was no cause before that I should feel thus," said he, in a smothered accent.

Alicia was alarmed; she arose, and, taking her husband's fevered hand, asked if she could do any thing for him.

"Much, much—every thing!" he replied; but still he trusted not himself to look at her.

"Surely," said his wife, "I have never forfeited your confidence; and, if I possess it, why not instantly point out to me how I can relieve you. Do you doubt my instant, my eager compliance?"

"Doubt you!" exclaimed De Lancy, with a passionate burst of feeling; "oh, my dearest Alicia, if I doubted you, it would not be to you I should apply to repair some of the evil I have done, or at least to weaken its effects."

"Do not torture me with suspense, or exhaust yourself by such wild emotion," cried Alicia.

"Hear me then, and, if possible, do not hate me. Poor Alicia! you weep for me—alas! it is not for me those tears will flow."

His voice sunk, and he covered his face. His wife scarcely thought him in his senses. She sought to win him to a calmer mood: she soothed, she caressed, she almost thought she loved him, so powerfully was her compassion excited. The bitter tears which pride had so long restrained burst forth, while De Lancy pressed the beauteous form of his comforter to a heart writhing with remorse. He devoured those accents of tenderness, for he felt they were the last he should hear from her. There was a momentary silence, during which he gathered courage, and in a hurried, suffocated tone, began—"You can save me much of misery by protecting your sister."

"My sister!" said his wondering wife, looking up to his face, to find there, if possible, some explanation of his words.

"In a few weeks," he continued, "Lucy will become a mother!—curse me not, Alicia—the child is

mine! Mine is the guilt, but hers will be the punishment, if—" he paused, for he thought she heard him not. With the first emotion of horror, she had started from her husband's arms; but, faint and trembling, she leaned against the wall. Her fixed eye was bent on vacancy; her colourless lips were unclosed; and but for the quick convulsive motion of her breast, she would have seemed lost to life, as well as to sense and motion. De Lancy looked anxiously at her; but he felt *his* support would not revive her. She drew a long trembling breath, and her features lost their marble look; her softened eye recovered its expression of agony.

De Lancy spoke: he came forward. Alicia knew not what he said; but, shuddering, waved her hand to prevent his following her, and went forth to seek her sister. The distance was not great, and agitation lent Alicia wings.

The falling snow drifted in her face, but cooled not her burning cheeks; the keen blast played over her defenceless head unheard and unfelt. Every thought and every feeling centered in one point to save her sister. Yet a new feeling of horror crept over her, as she approached the door of that lovely cot that looked so like the abode of peace! She staggered forward; her mother's voice reached her ear, and fell upon her heart. Breathless, she clung for support to the balusters, and exclaimed almost audibly, "My poor mother, your children shall not bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!" She ascended the stairs rapidly, but when she reached Lucy's door, she paused. "Ah! poor unfortunate!" thought she, "how will she be able to sustain my presence?" She heard a faint moan, and she hesitated no longer: her trembling hand with difficulty turned the handle—she entered. Lucy lay on her bed, with her face concealed in the clothes; her very curtains shook. One mighty effort of self-command and her sister recovered her strength and voice. She sat down by her, and calmly spoke: "Lucy, I come not to re-

proach you. Are you without confidants? Can we spare our mother?"

Twice Lucy tried to answer and failed. At last she said, "No one knows."

"Then," energetically exclaimed her sister, "no one *shall* know! I will arrange every thing; trust to me;"—and she touched the hand that hung lifeless by her.

Lucy drew her sister's hand to her lips, but remained silent, and raised not her head. Alicia bent over her in sorrow too great for utterance; it was the wreck of all her hopes, the utter annihilation of every thing that could lend a charm to life,—her idolized sister was lost to her. She was alive to nought save disgrace! Her chilled blood suddenly rushed to her temples. She arose, and swallowed with difficulty a glass of water that stood near her. Lucy raised her arm so as to see her sister, yet not enough to allow the light of Mrs. De Lancy's eye to glance on her. She beheld every muscle of that beautiful face contracted; her wild eye wandered to each object around her in fearful uncertainty. It was a misery beyond tears. Alicia shed none, but despair marked her countenance, and deepened every line of it. It was more than Lucy could bear: worn out with bodily and mental sufferings, she could not behold the misery she had caused. Her arm fell from her pallid face; and when Alicia looked at her, she found all animation fled.

On recovering, Lucy almost shrunk from the supporting arms that encircled her. She burst into tears. Alicia kissed her fair brow.

"Go to my mother, my dear Lucy; she will miss you: tell her, I will see her to-morrow; by that time our plan will be laid, and you will be saved all *I* can save you." Alicia sighed, for to her it appeared so *little* that she could save her; but Lucy's grateful countenance said otherwise, and that was enough. Mrs. De Lancy returned home more quietly than she had come forth. Absorbed in reflections how she might

best screen her sister's character, it was not till she accidentally raised her eyes, that she beheld her husband at some distance. She uttered a cry, and darted into the opposite path. Like one whose careless foot disturbs the slumbering rattlesnake, of whose existence he had not dreamed before, and starts from it in equal surprise and horror, was the sudden dismay that inspired Alicia. Of her mother and sister she had considered much; but on herself even she had not dwelt; —of her husband she had not yet thought. She took the way to the beach; she sunk on the first sheltering rock; the blood streamed over her face and relieved the throbbing of her temples. Her head did not feel so near bursting, and a few bitter tears fell over her pale cheeks. She gazed wildly on the broad expanse of waters.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "beneath those waves there is peace. Alas! I may not seek it there. What do my sufferings matter if I can save others? My duty is clear, and I will not selfishly shrink from it." She paused, and her mind reverted to the pangs of her sister. "God of Heaven!" she cried, "if I had suffered like her, could I have borne it? Could I have stabbed a sister's heart and lived, when a few short moments would have set me free; when one kind sheltering wave would have buried my guilt, my wrongs, and my remorse? O thou mighty Ocean! Could I have resisted thy merciful invitation?" Thus raved the frantic Alicia; almost losing her own anguish in the consideration of how intolerable must Lucy's be; forgetting that Lucy had neither her strong feelings, her generous distorted sentiments, nor her keen susceptibility; tremblingly alive to the shadow of disgrace, and incapable of incurring its reality.

CHAPTER XIX.

———Around me,
All seems like the dark mingled mimicry
Of feverish sleep; in which the half-doubting mind,
Wildered and weary, with a deep drawn breath,
Says to itself, 'Shall I not wake?'

Baillie's Plays.

THE shades of night gathered fast over the head of the overpowered Alicia; the wind arose with violence; its howling reverberated through those very cavities in the rocks which so oft had re-echoed the soft tones of Lucy's harp. Alicia, awakened to the observation of immediate objects by a sudden and tremendous blast, looked round and shuddered. It was a scene wildly desolate, almost horrible: and in that very spot she had so often sat, when the murmuring of the waves was scarcely heard; when the soft zephyr, laden with perfume, scarce fanned the cheek; when Nature rejoiced in cheerfulness and peace; when the pure bright sky was less unclouded than her own mind!

By an unconscious association of feeling, Alicia's eyes sought the heavens: it was a vast expanse, which the imagination magnified; for nothing accurate could be discerned. The dark clouds were hurrying athwart the gloom, with the rapidity of thought: they looked as if sent on some message of wrath, so frowning, so terrific; coming no one could see from whence, and going no one knew whither. A firmer mind than Alicia's might have quailed in such a situation; but she was too wretched for fear: she only wished to be borne on the

wings of the wind far away, to sail on the skirts of those flying clouds somewhere—anywhere but where she was.

She quitted her sheltering rock with difficulty—for the cold had numbed her limbs—and prepared to return home. As the idea presented itself, she wept. It was not a home where peace or virtue could be found. "Heaven be praised!" murmured she, "I never loved this man!" and the tears ceased to flow, for the bitterness of contempt had checked them. De Lancy was anxiously awaiting her return: he had seen her take the direction to Mrs. Neville's; he had seen her returning thence; but where she went afterwards, he knew not. That she was out and alone in so tempestuous a night, filled him with anguish.

"She despises the shelter of her roof," thought he, "for she would meet *me* beneath it!" He had just dispatched light and servants in search of her, when she entered. He started back, shocked at the alteration a few hours had made in her appearance. Pale, dishevelled, her clothes drenched, she stood before him with a look of such wild, stern despair, that he began to dread her reason must be unsettled. Awake now to every expression of countenance, she read this suspicion in his; and a flash of withering scorn just touched her pallid features, and passed off, like some pale meteor that shoots across the sky before we can be certain that we have seen it.

"Will you not sit down?" asked De Lancy, in a broken voice. She took the offered chair, for her sinking limbs could scarce sustain their burden. She paused: then addressing her husband, carefully looking from him, she related, in a quick and concise manner, totally foreign to her usual one, her interview with her sister, and the plan she had thought of, which would place her reputation beyond the reach of idle tongues. In these details, she touched not on a single feeling of any sort; and could an indifferent spectator have heard her narrative, without marking the tone in which it was uttered, or reading its meaning on her almost paralyzed

features, he would not have supposed any one for whom she cared could be interested in it.

De Lancy expected, indeed, that his wife would do every thing for Lucy; but he also expected agitation, tears, reproaches. He had enough feeling to behold with increased anguish the command in which she kept hers. Though her heart might break, it could never again sympathize with his. She judged him unworthy, unfit, not merely to share her sorrow, but even to see it.

"Have you any thing," she asked, "to propose?—any thing to change in this plan? Do you think it will fully answer every purpose of concealment?"

"Yes," he answered; "it appears a very safe one. But how will Mrs. Neville be induced to part with both her daughters for so long? She has never been alone."

"She will not be alone now," said Mrs. De Lancy. "You can take possession of my sister's apartment during our absence: mine will not exceed six weeks. When the danger is over, I shall leave Lucy to recover strength for her return, and you can then go to fetch her home. No one, surely, will be found inclined to censure a girl taking a day's journey from a friend's house to her mother's, with her brother-in-law."

Involuntarily Alicia looked up, and the crimsoned, agitated face of her husband, showed her the observation was taken as a reproach. She had not meant it as such; but to retract what she had said was impossible; and she added with quickness, "My mother has often heard of the earnestness with which Mrs. Delmie has petitioned to have Lucy with her. She will have no difficulty in believing we are gone thither, and the distance is great enough to prevent any of our neighbours hearing that we are not there; or if they do, they will only imagine we have changed our plan; and my character, I hope, is fair enough to preserve my sister's."

"No one ever doubted *your* character," said her husband, in a conciliating tone.

The momentary pride of fame was checked in the breast of Alicia, and her eyes swam in tears at the im-

plied censure on her sister. She clasped her hands wildly together; but again forcing the semblance of composure, she continued: "Should our plans be less successful than I expect, we can prolong our stay in Devonshire; and by appearing in public with Lucy, any report that may have arisen to her disadvantage, will naturally subside."

"Certainly, without doubt; but I trust none such will arise, and that your generosity will not be called to severer trials than the present ones."

"Ah!" thought Mrs. De Lancy, "all trials after this will be light;" but she did not say so; and bowing to her husband, she left the apartment in silence. Mechanically she turned to her own room; a cheerful fire blazed in the hearth, and her maid was preparing her things for the night.

"I am afraid you have caught cold, Ma'am, this bad night, you shudder so," observed her anxious attendant.

Mrs. De Lancy heard not her remark; but on seeing her draw a chair to the fire, she said hastily, "Oh, my good Mary, never mind that; I am not well to-night, so I will sleep with you."

"But my room, Ma'am, is so cold, and my bed so small—you will surely make yourself worse."

"No, no, I shall be well soon; and, in the mean time, I do not choose to disturb Mr. De Lancy."

The house was not large, and this little dialogue reached the attentive ear of her husband; he paused for a moment to consider its meaning. Ill in mind he could easily believe her to be; but he had never known her in better bodily health; and the excuse, therefore, for leaving his room could not blind him, although it might find credit with her maid. They had but a few days, however, to pass together previous to the journey, which could no longer be conveniently delayed; and his mind, full of other matter, reverted not again for many months to this overheard conversation.

The next morning, they did not meet, for Alicia breakfasted in her own room, and passed the greater part of her time, before the hour she was accustomed to be with her mother, in bathing her swollen eyes, and lending artificial brilliancy to those features, their excessive alteration being such as to strike even the unobservant Mrs. Neville.

"Where is Mr. De Lancy, my dear?" asked Mrs. Neville, after her daughter had sat some time with her. Alicia made with difficulty some indifferent reply, for her mother's tone of interest struct a jarring chord of feeling, and at that moment she thought her husband more guilty than ever. Lucy sat at her work: she neither spoke nor looked up; when her sister entered, her needle ceased to obey the tremulous uncertain touch of her fingers, but she still bent over her frame, to seek refuge from observation in apparent employment.

The well-known step, at last, was heard, and Lucy cast a glance of despair at the door, through which she would have given worlds to escape: but to return was worse than to remain. Her breath came quicker and shorter; she retreated at a greater distance from where De Lancy was to enter, and partly concealed herself behind her harp. Alicia trembled lest some scene should excite her mother's wonder and curiosity. She immediately arose, and, standing between her sister and the door, busied herself with looking over music-books.—Her calm collected tone struck her husband with astonishment. It restored him, however, to some degree of ease; and he took the vacant chair by Mrs. Neville, and contrived to speak of common things, though evidently with the air of a man who knows not what he says.

The old lady's perception, however, was never very acute, and she went on talking, and knitting, and smiling, with the most perfect and blessed unconsciousness that the three beings most dear to her were, at that moment,

a prey to the bitterest feelings that can fall to the lot of suffering humanity.

To keep her in this happy ignorance was equally the object of all present. Alicia set the example, and, encouraged by it, the other two strove to imitate conduct which their own fortitude could not teach them. If Alicia's powerful feelings and high sentiments of lofty romantic honour made her the most deeply wretched, still her misery, could it even have been greater, was of less enervating kind. She had no self-reproach to support. The humiliating consciousness of guilt was not there to palsy her exertions. When we have merited our own disapprobation, even should others be ignorant of our misconduct, we cannot help feeling that no one has confidence in us; and this distrust of the good opinion of others, must ever reduce us to play the most awkward constrained part possible. How much more embarrassing, then, must that situation be, where we are actually in the presence of one who has cause to despise us as much, if not more, than we condemn ourselves, and who, at the same time, shows so much simplicity and delicacy, that we have not the resource of being angry, and are obliged to admire the very being we have injured!

De Lancy and Lucy could hardly be oppressed with grief as was Alicia, yet, upon the whole, their feelings were far more intolerable. Indeed it could not be otherwise. For, great, overpowering, and dreadful as are the calamities which our fellow-creatures can inflict upon us, they must ever fade before the mightier evils we inflict upon ourselves. When our faults are of a nature to make any impression at all, they are more difficult to forget than the injuries others have done us. As soon as we thoroughly forgive another, we gradually forget what we were called upon to forgive; but real repentance is not thus lightly forgotten; and even the common regret which the most hardened person feels at the moment of erring, though partaking little of the na-

ture of remorse, is a lowering bitter sensation, since for the time it is decided and unequivocal condemnation of ourselves by our own hearts.

Mrs. De Lancy, who could not comprehend evanescent feelings, looked forward with horror to the long life of penitence and tears that lay, like a boundless horizon, before her sister. She saw the agony of the moment, and she reflected on Lucy's extreme youth with the deepest commiseration: she had so many, many years of sorrow to look forward to!—Alicia shuddered at the dreary prospect, where, to her clouded view, not the faintest sunbeam hovered, and the author of all this evil arose in blacker colours to her mind's eye.

The strong feeling of virtuous indignation which such conduct would have awakened in her breast towards a stranger, could not but be doubly aggravated by the sense of private injury. She felt it as his wife, but that was a transient emotion of anger which would have died away like many others of the same nature. But as the sister of his hapless victim, in how many ways did she not feel it? "There," thought she, "where I had garnered up all my happiness; the being to whose prosperity I looked, as the only good thing life had to offer to one but little favoured by fortune,—every feeling, every thought centered in her, and the chord of all this sympathy is broken! It is not merely barbarous,—it is most base, most unmanly! And shall I be told, I have sworn to *honour* this man? Away with the idle sophistry of words! I will believe only my own heart, which rejects with scorn and abhorrence the atrocious depravity of such a being."

Such was the determination of Mrs. De Lancy; but the person at present to be considered was not herself. She easily gained from her mother, leave for Lucy to accompany her on a visit to Mrs. Delmie;

and, two days afterwards, they quitted her cottage with that ostensible object. Every measure of precaution was adopted by Alicia, and they were not long in reaching the town of ———, where it was thought Miss Neville could be most securely lodged and easily attended.

CHAPTER XX.

Have I lived thus long—let me speak myself,
Since Virtue finds no friends—a wife, a true one,
A woman, I dare say, without vainglory,
Never yet branded with suspicion;
And am I thus rewarded?

Henry VIII.

LEFT alone with her sister, thrown completely on her protection, Miss Neville felt keenly all the humiliating circumstances of her situation. Her once dauntless spirit was subdued by a sensation new to her,—that of inferiority. Every thing in the part Alicia had to play, was noble; every thing in Lucy's was mean. Looking for security but in concealment; shrinking from the careless eye of casual observation; reading detection in every idle glance, and contempt in every indifferent smile; she was deprived of the consolation to which every unfortunate seems to have a right,—the consolation of complaint.

Every generous effort of which the human mind is capable she expected from her sister, but her sympathy she did not expect. Hardly could she have looked for it, had the author of her shame been an indifferent person. Mrs. De Lancy was capable of enthusiasm, but she had no other violent passions; and as there is no means of perfectly comprehending any thing of which the clue is not in our own breast, so the impassioned character was one from which she shrunk with alarm and dismay. Even the energy she admired in a man, he deprecated in a woman: it was frequently mis-

placed, sometimes wrong, and always unfeminine. Lucy well knew these to be her sister's sentiments: she felt, that to a mind so serene and pure she had no appeal. She could not plead love as her excuse, for was not that love a fresh insult to Mrs. De Lancy? And although De Lancy's influence was certainly great, greater at this moment than at any other, since he was the only person whose sophistry and whose tenderness could for a moment reconcile her to herself, yet she was not always quite sure that she did love him.

In his absence, her feelings were more akin to hatred; and every fresh mortification she endured, aggravated her sense of the injury she had received. Yet, how complain to Alicia of her husband? It could not be! And in silent, bitter rumination they continued their journey. Mrs. De Lancy saw with pain the increased gloom of Miss Neville's countenance, and the deepened despondency of her manner. With exertion foreign to her nature, she laboured to direct the thoughts of her sister to some future point; but Lucy's answers were short and absent, and Alicia's own mind wandered from the comparatively uninteresting subject.

Miss Neville longed to consult her sister about the disposal of her infant, should it survive; but she had not courage to begin the subject, which Alicia on her part cautiously avoided. She loved children; she had ardently wished for them; the birth of her first child was a joyful era, and her love for it immoderate; so also was her despair at its loss. She said and felt that it could not be repaired; still the birth of another would have softened the calamity—but she had no more; and although, with that decorum of feeling which marked her conduct, she confined the regret to her own breast, it did not the less exist. She had certainly given up her husband completely, for she scorned a mind so thoroughly debased; and with a being she despised, it was impossible to hold any farther communion.

Still she did not quite like that Lucy, the mother of a living child, should have more claims on his regard than

herself. She had so utter a detestation of jealousy in any form, that she would not suffer herself to believe what her real feelings were; but with pardonable sophistry persuaded herself, that this want of benevolence towards the innocent offspring of her husband, arose from her interest for her sister. It would be a living record of infamy! it would be educated by strangers, cast on the world helpless and destitute; surely, then, there could be no want of charity in hoping it might not survive! If it did, De Lancy must support it; there would remain, as it were, a tie between Lucy and her seducer. What morality, what philosophy," thought Mrs. De Lancy, "will ever teach her not to love the father of her child? It is perpetuating this criminal passion on both sides."

Alicia fell into her usual error of judging of others by herself. In point of fact, De Lancy loved his wife a great deal better than his sister-in-law; and Miss Neville would have been more ready to forgive him if the child died, than if it lived. Not that she did not wish it to live, dangerous and troublesome as it might be. The instinct of maternal tenderness is so strongly implanted in our natures, that it is only a very susceptible mind, shuddering at the idea of disgrace, that can succeed in overpowering it. Protected by her sister, Miss Neville was saved the scorn she had naturally incurred, and had therefore leisure to turn her thoughts from herself to her infant, toward whom she felt equal tenderness and commiseration.

There were few circumstances that galled her proud spirit more than the being obliged to the bounty of De Lancy. The indulgence of her sister was humiliating enough; but when she looked forward to the time when she should be forced to ask for money for the child, ay, and perhaps to be refused! her very brain turned. Hers was not the gentle spirit that lessened adversity by bending to it. Even at this moment, when her heart condemned her, she scarce listened to its reproaches, and mentally exclaimed, "Is not the punishment greater

than the offence?" The very consciousness of the utter condemnation and contempt which Mrs. De Lancy would feel for her, (however cautiously she might avoid expressing it,) made her seek for justification, or rather excuse, for conduct that admitted not of either.

A very ordinary share of firmness enables us to bear misfortunes we have not deserved, and could not have foreseen; but that is a singularly admirable spirit, which receives them as just punishments, and is grateful to that Providence that made them no heavier. Lucy certainly could not boast of this turn of mind, and the discipline she shrunk from was necessarily more severe. Even the gratitude she owed her sister was a fluctuating sentiment. Her kindest attentions were irksome to her, and she earnestly begged she might not be present at the birth of her child. Alicia saw the motives for the request, and readily complied with it. In an adjoining apartment she awaited the event, in agony of mind far surpassing the bodily pangs of the unfortunate mother. Hour after hour, she listened to the various tones of suffering extorted from her sister. One moment she expected to hear Miss Neville was no more; at another, she almost thought such a fate would be merciful. The feeble wail of an infant at last struck on her anxious ear, and scarcely could she refrain a cry of horror at the sound.

"It is a very fine boy, Ma'am," said the nurse, in a tone of exultation, as she approached Mrs. De Lancy, who hastily averted her eyes, and scarcely could repress the words rising to her lips, "Oh, God! bring it not to *me!*"

The nurse, mistaking her agitation for alarm respecting her sister, assured her she was doing well, and quickly left her to pacify the babe. Alicia remained petrified. True, she had known all this before; many a bitter tear had she given to the knowledge; but now she actually had beheld the living proof of guilt; the child of her husband and her sister had blasted her sight, and she thought that, until this dreadful moment, she

had never been convinced of the fact—so much more overcome did she feel than at the first intelligence. Inwardly she repeated, "And is it, indeed, my *own* sister—my innocent, light-hearted Lucy—my pride—my glory—my all? Have I lived to curse the hour on which she was born?" and she looked up with the stern, wild glance of one who indeed was calling down maledictions from on high. The agony that every working muscle of that beauteous face expressed, was not to be mistaken or overlooked; and the physician, who entered the apartment with a smile of congratulation on his features, showed, by the rapid change of his countenance, that it was not lost upon him.

Mrs. De Lancy now called up all her fortitude and self-control, whilst she listened to his report; but she could not so effectually conceal the shrinking horror with which she heard the babe named, as to suffer him to depart without some faint suspicions of woe and mystery, which his manner betrayed. The moment he was gone, Alicia felt this; she dreaded exciting the curiosity of a stranger, and determined to repair the mischief she had involuntarily done. When next he came, Mrs. De Lancy met him with the child in her arms; spoke of her constitutional nervousness, her great fears for her sister, and the happiness they both derived from the healthy appearance of the infant. The physician fixed on Mrs. De Lancy an examining, half-incredulous look; but her placid countenance removed his former impression. She was deadly pale indeed, and the traces of grief were too deep to quit a countenance to which they seemed to belong; but much of her usual languor had returned; and what he saw, he thought, might well be nothing beyond the rooted sorrow of years, which the most trifling agitation might excite afresh.

Alicia bore the scrutiny with firmness, and was rewarded by perceiving she had succeeded in her plan. The moment he was gone, it is true, she gave the babe in charge to the nurse, and felt as if she could breathe more freely when she had no longer to support it. Miss

Neville recovered rapidly; and as the time for their absence was drawing to a close, Mrs. De Lancy prepared to depart. She was to tell Mrs. Neville, that Mrs. Delmie would not hear of Lucy leaving her yet; but when her mother could not absolutely do without her, Mr. De Lancy might come to escort her home.

A less simple arrangement would have satisfied Mrs. Neville, whose penetration had never been acute, whose credulity, in general, was excessive, and who would at any time have doubted the evidence of her own senses in preference to that of her daughter. That daughter, indeed, was the soul of honour; and amid the thousand miserable feelings that now harassed her, few were more sensibly revolted from than those excited by necessary disguise. She was lost in wonder at the ease with which Lucy spoke of imposing on her mother. It was incomprehensible to one whose burning cheeks and faltering voice almost disclosed to every indifferent attendant that there was something to conceal.

There was a proud integrity about Mrs. De Lancy that would often make her act in defiance of all judgment, to maintain unwarped her steady virtue of sincerity. At the beginning of her second marriage, there could be but little doubt that her situation would have been improved, had she affected more attachment to her husband than at that time she really felt. In the same manner, by appearing indifferent to the society of pleasant people who amused her, she might have quelled De Lancy's jealousy. But every thing like playing a part was out of her character, for it required more energy, more selfishness, and less delicacy than she possessed.

She despised the poet's maxim, "Assume a virtue, if you have it not." She was eager to acquire what she really believed to be a virtue; but she would have blushed to appear other than she was, that is, *better* than she was; for other she *did* appear, and she felt it, without an effort to prove to the world that she was not estimated sufficiently. "To believe myself to be right,"

she would say, "is surely enough; it is not requisite that others should believe it too;" and this sentiment was in direct opposition to her sister's, who argued, that it would be a poor satisfaction to a man pelted by a mob to know, that if, by some impossible process, that mob could learn to know him better, they would cease to be unjust towards him. Lucy loved popularity; and, merry and thoughtless as she had been, she had courted it from the instant she had felt its valne.

Alicia wished to be admired, to be beloved too, by those towards whom it would be possible to entertain mutual feelings of regard; but general approbation, general good wishes, she never thought about, and, of course, rarely obtained. To Lucy it appeared a necessary science to know how best to cultivate the benevolent affections of the multitude. It was just possible these indifferent people might do you some good; it was very clear that nothing could be easier than their doing you harm. She had heard, and retained the excellent worldly maxim, "*Pour bien vivre dans le monde, il faut savoir le menager;*" and she would often smile at the proud simplicity with which Mrs. De Lancy kept on her even course, neither claiming praise nor deprecating censure.

With such different dispositions, it is not wonderful that Lucy's spirits rose as her escape from detection became more certain. The guilt that would never be known, was guilt of a paler dye. She meant to purchase, as it were, her forgiveness of herself, by the excellence of her future conduct; by greater devotion to her infirm parent; by more general benevolence and generosity. She wept at the thoughts of parting from her child; but she already formed air-drawn plans of seeing it at some future period. She proposed to herself to labour at re-uniting her sister to her husband, by exculpating him as much as possible; by dwelling on his affection for Alicia, and sincere contrition for past errors: and so practicable did all this seem to Miss Neville, that although she determined never to see De

Lancy, if possible, again, she anticipated a degr
domestic comfort for her sister, when time should
moderated the keenness of first feelings.

Mrs. De Lancy, meanwhile, although as sangui
her sister with respect to the success of their plans
entertaining no apprehension of discovery, was
thus easily animated. "From the world this dark t
action may be concealed; but who," thought she, "
conceal it from herself?" To receive comfort fro
ignorance of others respecting our conduct, was a
cies of moral degradation as little comprehensib
Alicia as the original guilt. She could not supp
possible that Lucy could exult in any thing but
also yielded comfort to herself—the sparing their
mother a blow she would not have recovered.

CHAPTER XXI.

——Athwart the wav'ring garish light,
Things move, and seem to be, and yet are—nothing.
Baillie's Plays.

ALICIA was received by her mother with her wonted delight. She listened to the reasons for having left Lucy, without expressing much either of surprise or regret; she simply observed, "I do not wonder she should find Mrs. Delmie's more amusing than home."

Mrs. De Lancy, trembling lest her mother should think herself neglected, forced herself to speak of the comforts of that home, and the undoubted attachment of her sister to Mrs. Neville.

"Oh, I dare say, my dear," said the old lady, "what you say is quite right; I was not supposing Lucy cared for Mrs. Delmie, only that the visit amused her—which is quite natural, you know. But I do believe you have not seen your husband all this time; and it was very forgetful in me not to send to him; for, poor man! he has not looked like himself during your absence;" and, as she concluded this unusually long speech, Mrs. Neville rung the bell to inquire for Mr. De Lancy. He had ridden out—and the pulses in his wife's forehead beat more temperately as she heard it. She was particularly anxious to get her meeting with him over, unrestrained by her mother's presence, who, though little gifted with observation, might still have seen something strange in it.

De Lancy, on the contrary, felt as if Mrs. Neville was a protection to him; and having seen his carriage

at a distance during his ride, he quickened his horse's pace, and arrived not many minutes after his wife. He directly entered the room; and covering his confusion by affecting surprise and delight, went up to embrace her. Alicia retreated with so unqualified a look of abhorrence, that De Lancy's embarrassment yielding to pique, he flung himself sullenly on the couch, without making another comment, although Mrs. Neville tried to win his attention by detailing all the *pros* and *cons* of Lucy's staying at Delmie Lodge. Fretful and impatient, yet with apparent indifference, De Lancy heard of Lucy's reasons, and of her hope that he would go and fetch her back when she was wanted.

To appear to agree to Mrs. Neville's wish, when, in fact, he should be pursuing a plan long since laid down by others, seemed so mean and contemptible, that, heartily ashamed of the part he had to play, he muttered some reference to his wife, who quickly made promises and speeches for De Lancy, which he was so little inclined to make for himself, and soon relieved the awkwardness of his feelings by leaving the room. Mrs. Neville continued most innocently to torment him, until, not being able to stand it any longer, he walked out, though with the dread of meeting Alicia.

As people, however, who mutually wish to avoid one another generally succeed, they did not meet until the hour of dinner assembled every one. Even then Mrs. Neville contrived to make comments distressing to both. They thought it very unlucky she should have fixed on such topics, without considering that almost any thing may be made to apply, by a person conscious of any particular circumstance.

The evenings were getting long, so that they had dined without candles, though at a late hour; and when the servant left the room, they were still unordered, gloomy as it had grown. There is sometimes in darkness a soothing power. There are many griefs it calms; we take refuge, as it were, beneath the friendly veil of Nature; we escape observation, and suffer therefore less

restraint. But this is applicable only to sorrows of a nature to rend the heart, without distracting the mind; to sorrows which reflection softens, and the bitterness of which tears and time may efface. The inward anguish that preyed on the mind of Alicia made her shrink from darkness and solitude; truly could she say, "Oh, for a charm against *thought!*"

There was a long silence. Mrs. De Lancy, from habit and association, looked through the casement to mark the progress of the orb of night. Slowly it arose through the thick shade of trees, silvering the tips of leaves on which not a breath played—one moment more, and its full light was revealed. In how many different situations, and with what different feelings, had Alicia's admiring eye rested on the beauteous planet! Memory at this moment seemed to recall them all—was not any thing better than the present? To that present, however, the train of thought naturally brought her, and for the first time she discovered her journey had chilled her. She stirred the fire to a bright blaze; and placing herself at her mother's feet on a cushion, she hung over the light, as if she had expected it could communicate to her its own cheerfulness.

Mrs. Neville fondly stroked back her daughter's raven locks, and half apostrophising herself, murmured, "Time has been, when no jewels were thought good enough to ornament this hair—and now——" Mrs. Neville paused, but her hand trembled on the head of her child.

"Dearest mother!" said Alicia earnestly, "you cannot regret such idle, useless luxury. Diamonds form no part of happiness." She spoke with forced gaiety, but to Mrs. Neville it appeared real, who affectedly replied, "My best Alicia! I was not complaining—how should I, when I see you so happy? I know what a good husband you have. It is a great comfort, too, against I die, to leave *both* my children to his protection and tenderness"—and she laid her withered hand on his arm with a look of such trust and

kindness, that De Lancy blest the expiring blaze that concealed his agitation.

He spoke of the affection of the sisters, and the care Alicia would always feel disposed to take of Lucy. His incoherent sentences were accounted for by Mrs. Neville in her own way. Even his wife pitied him; but it was a compassion unsoftened by tenderness, though not unmixed with contempt. Pursuing her own thoughts, Mrs. Neville reverted to the brilliancy of her daughter's *debut* in the world, and, as far as her feeble power and feebler judgment would allow, tried to prove her second marriage to be much happier than her first.

Unlike widows in general, Mrs. De Lancy heard her in silence. Never at any time had she praised Mr. Clairville in the presence of her husband. They were so different, that to commend a quality in one, would have been as certain a censure in the other. Besides, it was painful to her to name Mr. Clairville, unless to those few friends who loved him almost as much as she had done. She knew how little her mother approved of him at any time, and she carefully turned the conversation, if ever she saw it verging towards him, his opinions, or his conduct. This night, however, she made no such effort. It was now so certain a thing, that Mrs. Neville knew nothing of either her first or second husband, that it was like giving opinions on beings that had never existed, so perfectly dissimilar were they both to the supposed originals. De Lancy's patience was more severely tried than his wife's, and he sought to stop Mrs. Neville by some compliment to Mr. Clairville. Alicia's eyes flashed with resentment. It was profanation for *such* a man to defend one whom she thought needed no defence.

"Let those," she said sternly, "who sleep in peace, remain undisturbed by censure or by praise. They live in the hearts of those they loved—by others let them be forgotten!" The peculiar energy of Mrs. De Lancy's tone and manner startled her mother, who did not

therefore return to the subject, whilst her husband remained lost in wonder at what could have called it forth.

Mrs. Neville again spoke of Lucy, and expressed her hope that her eldest daughter would not quit her until her youngest returned.

"That," replied Alicia, "must depend upon Mr. De Lancy. If he remains here, I must go home, as there are many domestic arrangements that require either his presence or mine; but if he goes, I can take Lucy's place till her return." De Lancy had no difficulty in perceiving that his wife's arrangements had no other object than to be as much divided from him as possible. If this did not gratify him, it certainly could not surprise him; and he immediately observed, he would go home, and leave Miss Neville's apartment to her sister.

The time for Lucy's return was approaching, and De Lancy set off to join his victim, and shed on the baby-brow of his child those tears of contrition which were to supply the place of a father's blessing. And they were sincere ones; for there were moments in which this singular man could judge of the past with impartiality, and consequently feel that contempt and abhorrence of himself, which similar conduct in another would have inspired. There were other moments, and those the most frequent, when he treated the subject with the levity of one thoroughly selfish and unprincipled. There was a sort of subtilty in his understanding, that delighted in extracting evil from what was evidently good, or good from what was as evidently evil.

He was a warm admirer of all metaphysical refinements that tend to bewilder; of overstrained points in morality, where reason and nature are so completely omitted, that the beaten track of common-sense is totally lost; and, by dint of impossible situations and false deductions, virtues and vices cease to be immutable, and are, by the best intentioned men, taken for one another. Every wild theory had ever found in him a ready and able supporter. In argument, he ever adop-

ted what others would have rejected; where he did not convince, his lively imagination and sportive wit frequently staggered, and usually puzzled.

It is was not to be believed that a man so keen in debate should care so little which side he defended. The assertions he would make to surprise at first, he next supported, because he had made them. A great command of words, originality of thought, and happiness of expression, had made nothing better of him than a contemptible casuist. Powers that would have brought him fame, if properly, or even consistently applied, were worse than lost; since they not only benefited no one, but tended to injure himself. He was so accustomed to give the reins to imagination—so well satisfied with the figure he made, whatever opinions he might chance for the moment to adopt—that to ascertain what he really did think, was below his attention. He was of course then the sport of circumstances and passions; his guilt or his innocence depended on them.

He had, however, good instincts, as it were, that sometimes led him right; and occasionally good feelings, that would sometimes make him regret the very conduct, which the next day he would exculpate, if any thing occurred to deaden those feelings. As he sometimes blundered upon right, and had evidently no systematic plan of doing wrong, few people felt the full danger of such a character; and his want of principle and consistency was sheltered under the comprehensive epithet of eccentricity.

Had he found Miss Neville in the agonies of grief and remorse, he would have shuddered at the evil he beheld; but she was calm, sanguine with respect to futurity; and when she reproached him, it was with asperity rather than tenderness. He had, therefore, only to flatter her into better temper, and promise the child should want nothing while he had the means of supporting it. A heavy load was thus removed from Lucy's mind. She scrupled not to believe the promises of a

man of whose honour and integrity she had already had such unfavourable samples! It is in this manner that we are continually the dupes of our own want of reflection, and then most unfairly say we have been deceived by others.

Miss Neville parted from her infant with unfeigned distress. She subdued her feelings, however, as much as possible, before De Lancy: she was ashamed of appearing so keenly to regret *his* child: it was like a tacit avowal of affection for him, which she never felt less than while thinking of her helpless babe, whom she was compelled to desert, and leave among strangers. It was true, she had betrayed every duty to herself, to her venerable parent, to her kind sister: but her duties to her child were more imperious still, and yet those she was forced to betray; those which she would gladly have embraced, and gratefully cherished, it was not possible to fulfil. To condemn others, is always pleasanter, although never so safe, as to condemn ourselves; and when Miss Neville thought of her abandoned child, she was more exasperated against De Lancy than at any other time.

He soon felt this; and his efforts were now directed to one point almost,—that of making her forget its existence. He laboured to return to the former ease and flippancy of his manner; to obliterate, as it were, the past; and Lucy was too solicitous to draw a veil over that past, not to second him. All this was a matter of mingled wonder and horror to Mrs. De Lancy. That already the memory of such a transaction should begin to fade from the minds of the perpetrators, while on *her* brain it continued written in characters of living fire, was what she could not comprehend,—could scarce believe, although she saw it. They seemed, indeed, to vie with each other in promoting her comfort; and her sister was evidently anxious that De Lancy should quit Devonshire. But the lease of his house was not out;

and Mrs. De Lancy, hearing there were whispers afloat in the country respecting Lucy's absence, resolved not to leave her work unfinished, but, by appearing in public with her sister and husband, lead others to suppose that she, at least, attached no faith to these tales.

CHAPTER XXII.

Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep.
HENRY VI.

MRS. DE LANCY conscientiously and rigorously went through with her plan, but it cost her many a struggle: the call on her exertions was perpetual. She felt she was examined in public; that every harmless word might be construed by the gossips at E—— into a confirmation of their suspicions; and society, which on so many occasions had been her refuge, was converted into her bane. Every scheme of dissipation, every thing that promised variety, was eagerly adopted by De Lancy and Miss Neville. To them, any thing was better than their domestic circle; to drown thought was their first wish; and, as we never want excuses to ourselves for what we wish to do, Lucy persuaded herself it was better also for her sister.

Alicia's bodily strength sunk beneath trials so arduous and unremitting. She could not sleep without opium, which naturally producing a hatred of food, she grew weaker daily. Her pale cheeks, sunk and blistered with incessant tears, were vainly sought to be reanimated by artificial colouring, which only more strongly marked the faded hue of her lips. The affection on her nerves had been so powerful, that she at times dreaded it might impair her intellect; and the remedies to which she had recourse, while they lent momentary vigour and delusive strength, gradually under-

mined her constitution, and rendered their repetition necessary. Lucy and her brother-in-law, eager only to banish reflection, were the only people who felt not her alteration.

Even Mrs. Neville, the unobserving, the uninquisitive Mrs. Neville, would often say, "Surely, Alicia, you are not well to-day?" and though satisfied each time by her daughter's cheerful assurances to the contrary, again and again repeated the inquiry.

The lease of the house at last expired, and De Lancy consulted his wife on their future plans. Alicia, who had writhed for many months under every pang of wounded, insulted feelings, which, in her delicate situation, thoughtless selfishness could inflict, had long come to her determination. To name it, however, before they quitted Devonshire, seemed unnecessary; and to have executed it before, might have been prejudicial to her sister, for whom she had done too much to wish the sacrifice to be incomplete. When De Lancy heard her calm, irrevocable resolution to quit him, he testified as much emotion as if they had been living on the most cordial, affectionate terms. They had, indeed, been completely separated since the fatal discovery was first made; but De Lancy always supposed time would bring about their re-union; and, deeming every effort of his superfluous, he suffered the constraint he at first endured in his wife's presence to wear off, and left unimproved no opportunity of acquiring the cheerfulness he did but assume at first.

The sound of mirth and gaiety was not very congenial to Mrs. De Lancy's feelings, from whatever quarter it might proceed; but when it came from her sister and her husband, it betrayed in the one so much heartlessness, and in the other so much depravity, that her whole soul revolted from it. In vain De Lancy represented his income to be so limited, as barely to afford them necessary comforts when together: Alicia thought the evil of poverty light, when compared to the far heavier one of remaining beneath the roof of one who had poured

the phial of misery upon her head to its very dregs; whose conduct she abhorred, whose character she despised. She had long been deprived of luxuries, once thought indispensable; she had yielded them, not perhaps without a sigh, but certainly without complaint.

"You know," she said to her husband, "I have long lived upon little—I will learn to live upon less."

"But you cannot live upon nothing," replied he, "and what I could give you would be little better than nothing. Every possible indulgence within the scope of my fortune you may freely command, while you live in my house: I want none for myself. However you may condemn me upon many subjects, you know that I am not extravagant or illiberal—that my ability, and not my will, is in fault, if I have ever refused you any thing. I have heard of a cheap purchase, in a beautiful situation, far from hence, where different scenes, and other society, will obliterate what, I confess, scarcely deserves to be forgiven."

"Mr. De Lancy," said his wife, in a broken voice, "even at the first I was too miserable to be angry. Horror I must feel, but resentment I could have felt only against one I had passionately, exclusively loved. My sister was my first object—I have lost her, and my interest in life is over."

Mrs. De Lancy's utterance was choked; she gasped for breath, for the spasms, to which she was now subject, had seized her throat. Every muscle worked with strong convulsive motion—her countenance underwent a frightful change; and her husband perceived, for the first time, the havoc that sorrow had made in those exquisite features, and the symptoms of decay visible in her fading form. He viewed them with strong compunction and intense anxiety, for by fits and starts he loved this woman he had made so miserable; he would have made any sacrifice for her one day, and voluntarily have wounded her the next, without any motive, real or ostensible, for the change. He now passionately execrated his conduct, and implored her indulgence with tears;

making resolutions and vows for the future, which experience had taught Alicia would evaporate before the sun that witnessed them had set.

She did not, however, remind him of the versatility of his feelings, for those feelings had ceased to be any thing to her; she simply said, "She should condemn her own conduct as unfair, uncandid, and dishonourable, if she appeared to give into his plans from any other motive than imperious necessity; and she begged he would bear in mind, that if ever she had the means of quitting him, it was her firm intention so to do."

"At present," she added, "you think this harsh and unkind, but you will soon wish it as much as myself. I know not whether hitherto I have made you happy, but I can, at least, answer to my own conscience, that I have ever been to you a submissive, cheerful wife; that my object has been to please you, to moderate your grief in the hour of adversity, and to rejoice in your joy in the time of prosperity. That I should ever again share in your feelings, is impossible. You have broken asunder every sacred tie that united us. I can never again consider myself as your wife. I am but a dependant on your charity—perhaps I might add, on your justice; I accept the bread you offer, because I have no other means of procuring it, but our bands are broken never to be renewed; and you will soon, very soon, weary of an inmate, who, like some useless piece of furniture, will but fill up a corner in your house, that you will not be long in wishing otherwise occupied."

De Lancy was struck with horror at the barbarity of this prophecy; yet Alicia lived to see it fulfilled. The separation of the sisters was calm, and outwardly marked by no peculiarity; but De Lancy was now awake to every thing that concerned his wife, and he readily discovered, that while the serenity of Lucy was produced by an effort of pride and indifference, the tranquillity of her sister was but the stupor of fixed and gloomy despondence. She embraced her mother with almost as little emotion, and in reply to the observation of an ac-

quaintance, (who had called to wish her good-bye,) that she was not taking leave of Mrs. Neville for long, she observed, without shedding a tear, or losing her *sang-froid*, "I shall see my mother no more!" And she believed it—yet did she not at the moment feel it an additional misery; so torpid had her faculties become, in consequence of one overwhelming stroke, too mighty to suffer any thing else to be felt."

They were to reach their new abode by sea; a mode so utterly repugnant to Alicia, that at any other time she might have mentioned her fears and her sufferings, as obstacles to its taking place. But she knew it was best suited to her husband's finances; and she had now but one object, that of being as little expense to him as possible. He knew her alarms; he had not thought them worth considering, and she had a sort of proud satisfaction in not complaining. A few of their neighbours and casual acquaintance escorted them to the beach, and expressed their regret at losing them, with that appearance of warmth which such situations naturally call forth. It was a dreadful oppression to Alicia, who reproached herself with ingratitude, in being unable to return their friendly expresssions. "I know," thought she, "these people will forget me before the ship is out of sight, but does not their present kindness deserve also kindness from me?" But while these reflections passed in her mind, her manners continued frigid and absent. Receiving more attention from De Lancy, who, though usually flippant, could also be courteous, and felt now called upon to make up for his wife's neglect, they addressed themselves particularly to him. Alicia felt relieved, but not gratified, at this desertion. "Ah!" thought she, "it was not always thus! but now I chill all who approach me!"

The small vessel De Lancy had hired, having received them on board, weighed anchor, and prepared to depart, with all that air of bustle and eagerness attendant on such an occasion. The passengers, however, remarked not the commotion that surrounded them.

Absorbed in reveries, painful, though scarcely defined, De Lancy stood on deck watching the receding shores of Devonshire; but to him they had no beauty. Wrapped in a coarse plaid, which the rough but friendly hand of a sailor had sheltered her with, Alicia sat near the helm, with her eyes closed, in a state almost of stupefaction. A vague remembrance of those feelings of hope and pleasure with which she had entered the country she was now quitting, sometimes arose in her mind with all the force of contrast; then they would yield to an anticipation of the blank and cheerless future, from which she would recoil but to shudder over her present lot.

To live longer near her mother and sister was far from her wish; the effort had already been too much for her. Yet, as she bade a last adieu to those shores, she seemed to take a more decided leave than ever of all those illusions that had promised her happiness there. Launched, as it were, again on the world, where no heart beat responsive to hers, she had no longer the home to which her affections were wont to fly. Estranged in every way, and irrevocably so from her natural guide and protector, she was alone, among beings who all had some ties, some objects of tenderness. The feeling of desolateness is always peculiarly painful to a woman, born for affection and dependence; but there was in the desolateness of Alicia a pang peculiar to her situation.

To feel, in a land of strangers, lone and unfriended, is ever oppressive and miserable; we shed bitter tears over the graves of those we loved; bitterer still, when none remain to love! Yet, even then, time softens our fate. We have some fond remembrances on which to dwell; we hold, in spirit and in heart, communion with those whom we hope, in another state, again to meet; nay, in the living we sometimes trace resemblances of the dead, and our cheated hearts again learn to beat to the soft instinct of affection. But to the hapless Alicia memory brought no soothing balm—time no healing.

The feelings of the solitary mourner, who, kissing the turf on the fresh grave, says, "They were innocent, and now are happy," were bliss to those of this beautiful unfortunate. It was not the will of Providence, that for a season had separated her from those she loved; it was their unworthiness that had annihilated the feeling of attachment.

Her heart was withered, and she felt the coldness of decay had fastened upon it. If it is hard to bear a wounded spirit, when we know where that well of living waters is to be found, from whence alone we may obtain relief, how wretched is the lot of her, who taught to doubt its very existence, cannot profit by its power.—She too could say, "I am poor and in misery," without the blessed faith to add, "but the Lord *careth* for me!"

Their voyage was rapid and prosperous, till they came near the little island of Portland, when, just where the navigation became most difficult, the wind arose fearfully, and the vessel became scarcely manageable. Mrs. De Lancy, who, with a sort of constitutional nervousness and antipathy to the sea, had felt every motion of the ship, and continually fancied danger when there was none, now, at its real approach, became calm and resolute.

"In a few minutes, perhaps, thought Alicia, raising her beautiful eyes to Heaven, "I shall be in a better world, and forget the miseries of this," and her benumbed heart half-bounded at the idea! Inevitable destruction now seemed to stare them in the face. De Lancy was by nature courageous; he lost not his presence of mind, and whilst he laboured to avert their impending fate, he eagerly besought his wife to join the other passengers in the cabin. "If it is for me only you speak," replied she, "suffer me to remain here. It is a magnificent sight, and I cannot breathe below."

One of the female passengers earnestly called to her

to come down. "Why," she cried, "look death in the face; come down and pray."

"Pray!" thought Alicia, "to the winds?" Poor unfortunate! she saw not the Hand that ruled them! Terror was now at its height, and painted with its ghastly hue the countenance alike of the bold and the timid: the waves broke furiously over the deck, and the sailors were eager to bind Alicia with a rope, as her only security against being washed overboard. This she resolutely opposed: to De Lancy's passionate exclamations, she replied but by a smile of mingled feeling, from which her husband shrunk; and she continued to gaze unappalled on the awful scene before her. The vessel was a complete wreck, and no assistance could be procured from the shore, although they were so near it, for the boats dared not approach the eddy, which would have swallowed them up. A tremendous crash drowning the voice of the storm, seemed to announce instant destruction, and even Alicia mechanically closed her eyes: the vessel spun round with the rapidity of thought, as if enchanted to one spot; another crash was heard, and all was still. Astonished at remaining immoveable, Alicia uncovered her face, and at the same moment a cry burst from the sailors, "We are safe! we are safe!" She looked, and beheld far from them the foaming billows in which they had all expected to sink.

The hurricane had miraculously driven them out of their perilous situation, and they floated now on a calm surface. The boats pressed round them, in which every one hastened to seek refuge, for the vessel was so full of water they momentarily expected to go down. Once more Alicia trod the firm shore, and while the air rang with accents of joyful gratulation, she sighed to think a long life was probably again stretched out before her.

"Thank God, I have not lost you!" said De Lancy, as he drew her trembling hand within his arm—"lean on me; you must be exhausted."

Alicia concealed her tears with her veil, and the colour, that peril could not destroy, faded from her cheeks. After so miraculous an escape, which was less the wonder of the spectators, who had seen the same situation fatal to so many ships, than to the owner of the vessel, De Lancy thought it as well to finish their journey by land, and the following day brought them to their new abode, which was, indeed, as fair a spot as ever the sun shone upon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

What numbers once in Fortune's lap high fed,
Solicit the cold hand of Charity?
To shock us more, solicit it in vain!
Young's Night Thoughts.

De Lancy was eager to point out to his wife all the advantages of their present home, nor was she herself slow to perceive them. It was beauty very different to what attracted her in Devonshire. Nothing here was sublime or magnificent: there was no grandeur to appal or elevate the mind, but there was every thing to soothe and cheer it. Their house was almost too large for a cottage; but the thick foliage of surrounding trees more than half concealed its dimensions. Before it lay a meadow of most vivid green, which looked like a lawn to the house. The river, which was an arm of the sea, stretched far as the eye could discern on either side beyond the field, between which and the water was an elevated walk, shaded by a long row of trees. From De Lancy's cottage the walk was concealed, and even the formal range of elms was far from unpleasant, when the eye caught between the branches a glimpse of the water, or the masts of distant vessels seemed to mingle with the foliage. They looked from their shady bower peaceful and retired, yet were they not three-quarters of a mile from the town, which was one of the gayest and most picturesque in the South of England.

The society was by no means limited, but De Lancy early determined to mix but little in it. It was princi-

pally composed of men of large property, with whom he was unable to vie. A poor and sensitive man shrinks from the pride of wealth with more dislike than a low-born man feels at the pride of birth. Rank that is prized—that is, ancient rank, cannot be acquired; riches may be, and therefore we are disposed to fall out with fortune for favouring us in the pursuit less than many we fancy our inferiors.

The pride of birth, too, though doubtless a failing, is a more noble one than the pride of wealth; it has more polish, more good breeding, and an appearance of greater liberality; it is connected with respect for virtue and greatness in our forefathers; and most men who set a high value on ancestry, would blush to degrade it by mean or dishonourable conduct. In general, people are not proud of inherited riches, but of such as are acquired.

The Nabobs who swarmed around De Lancy's abode, had been known to spend with profusion for a few years, and then return to the East or West Indies, (from whence their first fortunes sprung,) to accumulate again. Such a proof of the consequence they attached to wealth will easily account for their neglect of their new neighbours. The few people whom De Lancy knew in this country were single men, whose visits he was far from encouraging, as his jealousy of Alicia had not altogether ceased. There was, indeed, one nobleman, whom he knew better and admired more than the others. Lord N—— had unfortunately married his mistress, and she was little visited. De Lancy hesitated for some time about taking his wife to the Castle, (as Lord N——'s house was called,) but it was almost the only place where he could get society at all to his taste, and he found himself established in the house, before he had quite decided on the propriety of going there at all.

De Lancy had seen many people noticed and even courted, whose conduct had been more glaringly criminal than Lady N——'s; the line of right was not

marked in his mind in the clearest possible manner; and as soon as he saw at the Castle some women of good character, his scruples about his wife vanished. She herself had never had any: she knew nothing of Lady N——, farther than that she was a beautiful woman, of very inferior capacity to her husband, neither very amiable nor much the reverse, and civil enough to her to make her house a pleasant one. Lady N—— had daughters by her first husband, grown up and admired.

Mrs. De Lancy had never delighted in the society of women at any age, and handsome girls were not the sort of people from whom she ever expected amusement. The society of the Miss G——s, therefore, formed no part of the attraction of N—— Castle, which lay principally in the escape from a home where her hours of solitude were cheerless, and those of society constrained. There was a simple, manly benevolence in Lord N——'s character, singular and often distorted as that character was, which roused the decaying powers of enthusiasm in Alicia.

It was by a sort of magic that he attracted the confidence of those around him, for his principles were calculated to repel it. His enemies called him an infidel and a republican, and his friends were more inclined to praise his talents, his generosity, his universal philanthropy, than to refute the assertion. His quick discernment soon pointed out to him the schism between De Lancy and his wife. Lord N—— had sacrificed his own domestic comfort at his darling shrine of honour, but he did not therefore suppose it was an illusion. His line of politics prevented his being very essentially useful to others, but he still thought he might be of some service to his old acquaintance, De Lancy, and, by placing him in a more comfortable situation, increase Alicia's enjoyments.

When, with the utmost delicacy, he hinted this, De Lancy was for a moment embarrassed. He was hurt to think his wife's coldness should be so evident; vexed that Lord N——, of all men, should see it; jealous of

the friendly interest his Lordship acknowledged for Alicia, and feaful of losing the esteem of a man whose good opinion he really prized. He knew the turn of Lord N——'s mind, and was aware that what would excite the curiosity and suspicion of an ordinary one, would with him check every attempt at investigation.

He declined his Lordship's offers, frankly confessing his wife had a noble soul, and would remain unchanged towards him, whatever his situation in life might be. "Besides," he added, "I am far from quarrelling with my poverty; it is the only tie that binds us together. Circumstances we should both strive to forget have alienated from me an affection that was never strong. I do not, however, despair of regaining it, should no opportunity of leaving me with propriety occur. I have been thus explicit with you, my Lord, relying on your honour and discretion, to avoid the subject with my wife."

"Most assuredly I will," replied Lord N——. "I did not wish to interfere impertinently; and, if I can do no good, I will be content to do nothing."

De Lancy rejoiced at having set the subject at rest for ever; yet this conversation left unpleasant traces; for it had betrayed, on the part of Lord N——, an anxiety about Alecia at which he felt not a little inclined to take umbrage. Lord N—— scrupulously adhered to his engagement of not reverting to what had passed in presence of Mrs. De Lancy; but he accidentally gave her a clue she was eager to profit by.

The conversation at table turned one day upon pensions. Of course they were all to be abolished; for none of the gentlemen present had any chance of getting one, and felt, therefore, no latent indulgence towards them. The discussion brought on so much violence, and violence will always bring on so much nonsense, that though the pictures of Murat and Condorcet, hanging on the walls, seemed to encourage such conversation, Lord N—— was too well bred not to check it, where it could do no good. In the light tone of raillery

he defended the pensions, declaring it to be dreadful want of gallantry to attack what had furnished paint and gauzes to so many poor ladies of quality.

"Consider," he continued, "that without these wicked pensions, we should never have seen Lady Mary S—— in that enchanting dress of purple and gold, that furnished us rustics with conversation for a month."

The gentlemen took the hint, and suffered the discourse to acquire a calmer tone; but Alicia, who was next Lord N——, asked what interest had given Lady Mary a pension? She had known her formerly, and was aware how acceptable it would be. Lord N—— knew nothing about her; and had named her but as the first person that occurred to him. He observed, that it was very much a matter of chance; that some people got them, who scarcely expected it; and others were refused, who had felt sure of success.

"I have known," he added, "women get pensions by applying to the Prince. If he had known and admired them in better circumstances, they were often granted. Widows of distinguished men have almost a claim to them. Pensions of this trifling nature are much upon a footing with apartments in the palaces."

Mrs. De Lancy was obliged to follow the move of the lady of the house, who was quitting the room, and had no opportunity in the evening of renewing the conversation; but she pondered upon it till the hope half arose in her breast, that in an application of this nature she might prove successful. She had certainly known the Prince well, and been admired by him. It was hardly long enough ago for him to have forgotten her. Mr. Clairville, too, might be called in some respects a distinguished person; and his widow might obtain something from the exertions of his numerous friends. She knew few women intimately enough to write to upon the subject; and she felt it to be so like begging, that she could not bring herself to address any of her male friends. At last, she thought she might venture to write

to Lady De La Ville, whom, at one time, she scarcely passed a day without seeing.

This lady piqued herself on having a select society. She admitted no one to her parties who was not celebrated for something. She had been eager to attract the beautiful wife of Mr. Clairville, as much on her own account, as on his; for she was not only supereminently lovely, but she was the fashion; and Lady De La Ville looked upon fashion as the supreme good. Even as she advanced in life, she did not cease to cling to this phantom. The severe lesson, of seeing an only son ruined in fortune and character, from being addicted to fashionable vices and follies, was taught this wretched woman in vain. She mourned his depravity, she resented his heartlessness to herself; but had she been the mother of fifty sons, they would all have been brought up alike, and run the chance, therefore, of being as little respectable as General De La Ville.

Alicia knew that her friend (for so she called herself) had the misfortune to have an unamiable son; but she had never thought of reflecting upon the probable causes of his improper conduct, and therefore pitied Lady De La Ville, without dreaming of censuring her. She knew her to be good-natured; she remembered the winning blandishment of her manner, and she tried to forget the world had accused her of caprice. Still this letter was not easily written. Mrs. De Lancy made many ineffectual attempts, and shed many unavailing tears. At last she got through it.

"Thank Heaven I have finished my *petition!*" said she, giving it into her husband's hand. "It there any thing you would wish altered?"

"Nothing," replied De Lancy with a sigh; for to him it appeared to call for a service, Lady De La Ville could have no motive in not instantly doing her. He sealed the letter with the conviction, that in a few days his wife would probably quit him entirely. And the pain this conviction gave him, would not have been believed by any one, who had witnessed his harsh language

to her but a few hours before, merely because she demurred about giving a character to a servant, who had publickly acknowledged that the child, to which she expected shortly to give birth, was De Lancy's!

But his sorrow or his anger produced no effect on his wife. It was not in the warmth of resentment she had said sympathy between them was at an end; and it was a sentiment that time was likely to strengthen, by every day giving her fresh proofs of the instability of all good feeling in De Lancy's breast. There were moments when she scorned so thoroughly a character so depraved and versatile, that she could almost find in her heart to rejoice that every tie that had once bound them was indeed broken. Any thing else she might have borne; any other guilt duty might have taught her to pardon. Now, with the Italian poet she could say, "I am free," and, alas! add like him "and miserable!" As the invalid with feverish impatience looks to change of air and place as a certain remedy to inveterate complaint; so did the harassed mind of Alicia, not less diseased, look to the possibility of quitting her husband's roof as the panacea to every ill.

Her powerful feelings were strongly repressed, but the effort exhausted her. She longed for some solitary spot wherein to die in peace. She felt as if she should breathe more freely, if once she could get to some place where no one recalled the bitter associations that pressed upon her at every step. She looked anxiously for an answer from Lady De La Ville. The letter would take only two days reaching her. At first she thought she should hear immediately, if only to say she wished her well; she then thought Lady De La Ville delayed writing, until she could communicate what had already been done for her, and with what success.

She was fertile in reasons for this apparent neglect, but time destroyed them all. Still she could not persuade herself that a person who had once showed her so much kindness when she stood in no need of it, should withdraw it now because it might be serviceable. Alicia

would have thought this a calumny upon human nature, and particularly unfair to so good-humoured and obliging a person as Lady De La Ville. She had directed her letter to her Ladyship's country-house; so she persuaded herself it could not have reached her, by some blunder of the servants, and that both Lord and Lady De La Ville were certainly in London.

She wrote, therefore, again. It was still a task, but it was hardly a trial. She had less hope, therefore less agitation; the edge of pride was already worn down by the first application, and that reserve diminished which teaches us to hold our sorrows sacred. Not, indeed, that she touched much upon them, in either letters, or alluded to their peculiar nature; but there was a tone throughout, of unvarying, uncomplaining sadness; a simplicity and mildness in stating the fact of her poverty, that could hardly fail to touch one who had so courted this very Alicia while in the blaze of beauty and splendour.

There are, however, some hearts that can feel only for what they see; others, that feel but for themselves. To those who know Lady De La Ville, it is left to determine which case was hers; one thing is certain, that her *friend's* second letter extorted no farther notice than the first. Mrs. De Lancy could not flatter herself with its not being received, for she was without doubt in London, where she had given parties and been to Court. "Surely," thought Alicia, "I have been in a dream; can it be, that a few years ago this woman would have rejoiced in an opportunity of gratifying me! Am I forgotten alike by every one? Have I outlived myself?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

——— Like the lily
That once was mistress of the field and flourish'd,
I'll hang my head and perish.

Henry the Sixth.

SURPRISED and disappointed at her entire failure, Alicia did not feel courage enough to make any application elsewhere. She continued to drag on a weary existence, sensible of the decay that was slowly but certainly consuming her without regret; for she had nothing to hope. The absence of Lord N——, who was attending Parliament, was, in a certain degree, a loss to her. Lady N——, indeed, remained in her strange and comfortless castle; but Alicia thought her less friendly in her manner than formerly; and Lord N——, she thought, had carried with him most of the benevolence, and all the polish of his society. She missed his kind judicious attentions. The style of conversation seemed degraded. The men talked to her of hunting, and the women of embroidery; the former approached her with an air of familiarity, to which she had never been accustomed, and the latter treated her with a sort of affability and protection, which moved her wonder as much, although it excited her indignation less.

Very excellent reasons for not going to N—— Castle now presented themselves naturally. The weather looked like rain, she had a cold, and was afraid of the night air. De Lancy was the bearer of her excuses, and as he was in greater favour with Lady N—— than his

wife, he could easily contrive to make them acceptable. At last Lord N—— came down, and called the very next day on Mrs. De Lancy with his wife, who was again all smiles and graciousness. She pressed her to dine at the castle that day, and Alicia accepted, without consulting the weather. De Lancy had taken a fit of jealousy and would not go; his wife, therefore, gave it up also, but she made not the smallest effort to dispel his suspicions. She could not feel hurt at any thing he said or thought concerning her, and she went on painting in perfect composure, while he walked up and down the room, giving vent to his anger, in the most unmeasured language.

The door-bell announced a visiter. "There," said De Lancy, looking out of the window, "is Hardwicke; he shall be the judge whether I have not good grounds for my complaints."

"You will expose yourself to no purpose," said Alicia, laying down her pencil and rising calmly; "and as I do not want to see you make yourself ridiculous, I shall leave you to Mr. Hardwicke."

"No, no," said her husband eagerly; "*I* will go till I am calmer;" and he left the room at one door, while his visiter entered it at another.

"A most amiable person," said the latter, advancing gaily, "to furnish one, of his own accord, such a *tete-a-tete!*" I heard De Lancy's voice as I came in, and as he has flown, I can now disprove all the calumnies I have heard of his jealousy, and vigilance in guarding his beauteous treasure."

Alicia coldly withdrew her hand from her visiter's determined grasp. She disliked him more from instinct than reason, for she knew nothing to his disadvantage. He was a man of talents, who could be agreeable when he thought proper, and force one to forget the malicious expression of his countenance. But at this moment it was so evident, that Alicia recoiled from him, and to avoid again looking upon it, she resumed her drawing. Mr. Hardwicke knew more of the art than she did, and

he pointed out some improvements that might be made in the piece she was copying.

He was leaning over the back of her chair, faintly sketching them with her pencil, when De Lancy returned, and started with almost as much horror as he would have felt at seeing Lord N—— in the same situation. Eager about his drawing, Mr. Hardwicke spoke to De Lancy without moving or looking up; but Alicia saw, by the quivering of her husband's lip, the storm that was gathering. He made, however, a strong effort at self-control, and turned to the window.

"So," said his visitor, relinquishing at last Alicia's pencil, and seating himself on the other side the table, "Lord N—— is come down at last. He was in no hurry to leave town, but his lady did not grow thin in his absence."

"There was surely no cause of anxiety," said Mrs. De Lancy; "she knew he would return."

"True," replied Hardwicke, sarcastically; "and if he had not! Trust me, there is no philosophy so powerful as indifference."

"Alicia ought to know that!" exclaimed De Lancy, a spark of the half-quenched flame bursting forth.

"Impossible!" said Hardwicke; "those beautiful eyes were meant to express tenderness "

"You are mistaken," said Alicia, haughtily averting them.

"Nay, then, suffer me still to be so, in pity! I would not for worlds, have my theory on physiognomy dissolved into thin air."

"You need not fall out with your theory," observed De Lancy; "I can vouch for those eyes expressing whatever they choose; and only regret that their natural expression should be indifference."

"Their ordinary one, perhaps, you mean," said Hardwicke, with a smile.

"Ay," exclaimed De Lancy, firing at his own thoughts, "it may be so! Say this instant, madam," he added, approaching his wife with the gesture of a

maniac, "if you might now choose, whom would you have for a husband, Mr. Hardwicke or me?"

The hectic streak that flushed on Alicia's cheek, faded at this unmanly outrage; she cast an appealing look of anguish to Heaven, then threw the full light of her wild eye on him, while she calmly replied, "Neither! as I hope for mercy!"

Shocked at the countenances of De Lancy and his wife, Mr. Hardwicke abruptly took leave, feeling no inclination to study physiognomy in so painful a manner. He repeated the conversation, however; and, while the younger part of their town society ridiculed the infuriated jealousy of De Lancy, the good matrons attacked the reply of his wife as wrong in itself, and likely to increase irritation.

Alicia heard, some time after, how much she had been condemned at the gossiping tea-tables by those who knew her not, and smiled at the pertinacity which ever leads us to judge of others, although it is so seldom we can know any thing either of their situation or their feelings. An interval of calm succeeded, during which De Lancy accompanied his wife to the castle.

"Do you know," said Lord N—— to the latter, "I have been lately surrounded by your friends and admirers, who all want to attract you to London?"

"It would not be difficult," replied Alicia; "but who may these people be, who have not forgotten me?" She checked the rising sigh, for she thought of Lady De La Ville without noticing it; Lord N—— named several who had inquired after her with interest.

"That," thought Mrs. De Lancy, "was because they did not know I wanted any thing."

There was but one person in whose sincerity she had much faith, and that was a lady in whose house she felt no inclination to be an inmate, for her history was not the most respectable possible. Early in life she had captivated the Earl of C——, to whom she was united by the will of an imperious mother, with whom, it is said, the young lady made but one stipulation—that her hus-

band should not wear a wig. Lord C—— luckily, or perhaps unluckily, was content with his own hair—so they were married, and the young lady made but one step from the nursery to the most intoxicating scenes of revelry and dissipation.

The protection of her husband, her extreme youth, and captivating beauty, supported her in the world, long after her character had sunk beneath the repeated attacks made upon it. It was even asserted that Lord C——, coming home one night unexpectedly, had found his footman in his place: but we are grown more indulgent since the days of the Arabian Nights, so, instead of dispatching the faithless lady and her gallant with his cimetar, and throwing their bodies into the ditch below the castle, he retired quietly to another apartment, without being ill-bred enough even to awaken them! This generous system was carried on throughout, and Lord C—— died without depriving his wife of his name, although he had latterly lived separate from her.

It was not easy now to keep her footing in society, so she went abroad with one of her lovers, and ended by marrying a German prince. As, unhappily, there was one unfortunate flaw in her *seize quartiers*, this was but a left-handed marriage. However, it patched up her character, and she returned to England, lived in splendour, and was given every where but at court, the rank of her second husband, who died in this country. His widow was sincerely afflicted, for he was heir to a throne! She had now passed the meridian of life, so she thought it high time to set up for propriety, and live retired.

She had played this part some time, when the beautiful Mrs. Clairville became acquainted with her. Fascinated by her manner, Alicia gave little credit to the reports against her, which, indeed, rather belonged to the past generation than to the present. Still, to owe obligations to a woman no one esteemed, was what she did not relish, and she heard the kind invitation sent by Lord N—— with real vexation, since she felt it impossible to profit by it.

Not many days after Lord N——'s return, as Mrs. De Lancy was returning from a visit to the castle, a well-known voice called her by name. She turned round with emotion resembling pleasure, to acknowledged the celebrated Mr. R. J. Blarney. This gentleman, whose almost matchless powers of eloquence have not rescued him from the deserved contempt of his public friends, as well as his private ones, once aspired to the hand of Alicia. He had been her passionate admirer during the lifetime of his friend Mr. Clairville; but beneath all the wondrous softness and timid helplessness of the spoiled beauty, he discovered enough of native resolution to convince him how unfairly the world judged of her, and to show him the folly of seeking to detach her from her husband. He did not make the attempt, and his kindness and sympathy on the death of that husband, won the gratitude of one who was eager to see generous motives in the most trifling actions.—Her gratitude, however, was not the only sentiment he wanted; but it was the only one she could give, and Mr. Blarney consoled himself by almost immediately marrying a woman the very reverse of Alicia.

He had come to S**** to see his wife's sister, who was married and settled there, and it was with no small degree of wonder he met with this object of his former attachment. Such was the havoc a few years of misery had made in her face and form, that he at first thought her only the likeness of herself; but as she passed him, she raised her eyes to return a lady's distant bow, and those eyes could not be mistaken! He had not seen her since her marriage, and he had much to say of all her former acquaintance.

"You are in a lovely situation," said he, as she pointed out her white, cheerful-looking house; "but you don't intend to be mewed up here all the year round, I presume. You will come to London some time before you die?" He spoke at random, but he saw more from her countenance than her vague reply, that he had touched some chord that did not breathe harmony. He

was really interested for her, though she was no longer the *peerless Alicia*, and expressed that interest in a manner so earnest and gratifying, that Mrs. De Lancy confessed her wish to go to town, and her object in so doing.

"I am very sorry," said Mr. Blarney, "your husband's circumstances should be such as to require a pension, for I do not know on what plea it can be applied for."

Mrs. De Lancy was embarrassed; she began several phrases, without concluding any, and at last remained silent. It was very easy to say in a letter, "Circumstances have brought Mr. De Lancy and myself to the resolution of separating," but in conversation it was difficult to announce the fact, unsupported by the shadow of a reason. She would sooner have said to a woman, "I am leaving my husband," than to a man, especially to one of Mr. Blarney's profligate character. Yet a moment's reflection taught her she was wasting time that was precious. She knew not when she might again fall in with so warm a friend, and she had as little doubt of his ability, as his will, to serve her, for his favour at C—lt–n House was generally acknowledged. When Mr. Blarney found it was her own exclusive comfort that was in view, he grew much keener, and more sanguine.

"I will think of the best means for you to pursue," said he, taking leave at her door; "and to-morrow, before I go, I will see you. I have no doubt of your plan being very practicable, and I hope you know how entirely you may command me, in all possible, I had almost said all *im*possible, things."

Alicia thankfully pressed the farewell hand that was presented to her, and entered her house with a step somewhat lighter than that with which she had left it.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ici rien de si réel que le regret des choses qui ne sont plus.
Letters of J. Tweddell, Esq.

"WHAT new friend was that you would not bring in?" asked De Lancy, looking off his book, as his wife entered.

"No new one," she replied, "but an old and tried one. I was almost surprised at Mr. Blarney's remembering me; if his zeal does not cool, I am more likely to get my pension through his interest, than through that of Lady De La Ville."

De Lancy made no other comment than quoting from a new publication* the lines adapted to Mr. Blarney.

"But night draws on, and darkness hastes to hide
Unfruitful talents, genius misapplied;
Fame without reverence, age without respect,
Doom'd to regrets, and sinking to neglect."

"How can you, Mr. De Lancy," said Alicia indignantly, "load your memory with such scurrilous trash? I do not pretend that Mr. Blarney is a man particularly to be relied on; I have heard of his doing unfair and unkind things to many people, but towards me he has always been friendly, and therefore I shall not change my opinion of him, until he changes his conduct to me. He will call here to-morrow, and you yourself may hear what his advice is."

* Epics of the Ton.

"It will be plausible, no doubt," said her husband; "its being sincere is another matter."

Alicia made no reply, but awaited with no small anxiety the interview of the following day.

Mr. Blarney came in a great hurry, for people who have nothing to do, are always in a hurry. "I have been turning over in my mind our yesterday's conversation," said he, as soon as he was seated, "and, I think, all things considered, you have a fair chance of a pension, if you show yourself. But I am afraid it is too true, that '*les absens ont toujours tort.*' Go up to town, mix in the society of His Royal Highness, and the thing is done. To the few people who have interest, and reside continually in town, to be out of London, is to be out of the world. If you write to them, they forget your application, as they have previously forgotten your existence. Do but appear, and you will find Mrs. Clairville, though under another name, has not lost her influence in society."

Alicia shook her head mournfully, but she remained silent.

"If," said Mr. De Lancy, "your friend thinks success so certain, it is worth the trial. You can accept Lady C——'s invitation."

Mr. Blarney turned his keen eye upon the speaker with an expression of undissembled wonder. Alicia, who was accustomed to the peculiar character of her husband, and the strange footing on which they lived, did not assign the right motive to Mr. Blarney's look; and imagining he thought the proposed visit unwise, asked what sort of society Lady C—— kept, and what degree of respectability she enjoyed. Mr. Blarney smiled at the word so applied; but not being nice upon the subject of character, for very obvious reasons, gave a very favourable account of Lady C——.

"She has long lived very quietly," said he, "and she is old; nobody troubles their head about what she has been. You will meet there all your old acquaintance; chiefly men, I confess, but men are just the peo-

ple to be of use to you in your pursuit, and to be in earnest in your cause."

"That," replied Alicia, "I readily believe; but I shall not wear written upon my forehead, 'I am come to London to solicit the P—— for a pension,' and I cannot tell all the idle men I meet with 'I want money.'"

"Confess," said Mr. Blarney, laughing, "that pride deserves a fall. You have so long reigned sovereign empress over the hearts of men, that you will not 'bate one inch of your dignity, or stoop to confess before your slaves that you are in need of their assistance."

"You do not understand me," rejoined Alicia, with quickness, "I may have been proud of beauty, of which so little now remains; I may have been proud of universal homage, which has long ceased to be paid me; but I was never proud of wealth. One of my great errors has been the not sufficiently appreciating it. I am not ashamed of being poor, much as I may regret it."

"I shall not," observed Mr. Blarney, "attempt to unravel the ingenious puzzle you have made between pride and vanity, for we are not talking metaphysics. But suffer me to urge the propriety of your going to town before the season is quite over. It is a short journey; you need not stay long if you do not find Lady C——'s style suit you, and, I think, I may venture to promise it will answer. As your husband is of my opinion, you can have no good reason against it. I must be off now; but I will make it my business to see Lady C——, and to prepare her for receiving you."

"You are in a great hurry!" said Alicia, in a tone of irresolution, for the prospect of independence was very tempting.

"Because," said Mr. Blarney, "I have always found five minutes' reflection do me as much good as five hours'."

"I do not doubt it," returned Alicia, smiling; "for

I don't suppose you ever considered for two minutes in your life."

"Well, well," exclaimed Mr. Blarney, "all I wanted was a little light on that clouded brow, so now farewell. By speaking in general terms to Lady C——, I shall leave you an opening to say nay, should your proud fit, or your timid fit, or any other silly fit, seize you again, and induce you so to do, which I sincerely hope it will not. Adieu!"

In the course of the evening, Mrs. De Lancy again asked her husband if he did not really see any impropriety in her visiting Lady C——. With some skill, and much apparent indifference, he obviated her objections, and her journey was resolved upon. De Lancy was not in this conduct as inconsistent as he appeared. He did not wish to lose his wife, and he was willing she should try plans not likely to be successful, that their constant failure might, in the end, reconcile her to remaining entirely with him. He was glad to see the visit to Lady C—— fixed, for he knew Alicia well enough, to be assured she would suffer from it so much, that from contrast she would almost feel pleasure at returning home. In her awkward situation, it was hardly to be expected she should escape insult, open as she was to it from the character of her hostess. With this persuasion he gave the money for her journey with alacrity, and Alicia almost wept at the imaginary trait of generosity.

Mr. Blarney saw Lady C——, delivered a message from Mrs. De Lancy of his own inventing, which produced a pressing invitation from her Ladyship, with which Alicia immediately complied.

B—— House was a few miles out of town, but as Lady C—— went to no evening parties, and had plenty of equipages, it was no inconvenience to her. It proved, however, a serious one to her guest, who wished to see many people in the evening she could not see in the morning. There is no putting other people's horses and servants out of their usual way; and Alicia gave up the point, and perceived she must content herself

with Lady C——'s society. She saw Mr. Blarney every day, who had ingenuity enough to satisfy her, without coming to any positive statement. In the meantime, she was an object of curiosity to Lady C——'s circle, every individual of which had not always the delicacy and forbearance to conceal from her that she was so.

Lady C—— could not comprehend Alicia's embarrassment, when she stated to any one likely to be useful to her that she wished for a pension to enable her to leave her husband. Her Ladyship thought nothing on earth could be so simple as quitting a person you disliked, and did not imagine any better reason could be wanted. Among the people on whom Mrs. De Lancy called, was Mrs. Morlay and Miss Clairville. The former received her with distant civility, which knowledge of her situation would have melted into kindness, but to disclose that situation was impossible; and depressed by this lady's coldness, and mortified at the contemptuous airs of Lydia, Mrs. De Lancy soon put an end to her visit.

Her daughter-in-law had grown up all Mr. Clairville had predicted. At once flippant and affected, she was laughed at by all those who did not think it necessary to pay court to Mrs. Morlay, whose idol she evidently was.

This lady was profuse in her praise of her dear Lydia to every one, and thus brought down upon herself a portion of the ridicule that attached to her *protegée*. A few, very few people, who could do Alicia no good, received her with kindness. It was generally thought she had married a worthless man, and some good-natured people were found to regret that so beautiful a creature should be thrown away. But this did not advance the pension. She had formerly seen so much of the P——, that she forgot, that thousands who live in town never set eyes on him; and as day succeeded to day without her meeting him, she seriously asked Mr. Blarney, if his Royal Highness really was in London?

Lady C—— took her one day shopping, and fatigued, at last, with getting in and out of the carriage to see things she could not purchase, Alicia remained in it, while Lady C—— executed her commissions. She drew down most of the blinds, and leant back, revolving in her harassed mind the little success that had hitherto attended her journey. There were many causes to which this could be attributed. The state of parties had changed materially. In Mr. Clairville's time, the Members of Opposition were almost all men of talents and weight, who might be said to govern, in a negative manner, since they kept the Ministers in awe. The lapse of several years had produced no slight alteration. People wearied of being in an Opposition never likely to come in, while the reins of Government were held in so firm a grasp as those of Mr. Pitt's. Some became exasperated, as they saw power, and their violence alarmed the more moderate ones. Some supported a Minister they did not like, because they thought Government should not be enfeebled in times of danger; some were fascinated by his talents; and others thought the shortest road to fame, as well as to emolument, was a third party, of which Edmund Burke was the head. To oppose this party to the great leader of the Whigs, was fighting him with his own weapons; and the Minister had cause to rejoice in so able a manœuvre, which not only weakened and divided the Opposition, but excited doubts in the mind of many, as to which was the most true to Whig principles, Mr. Burke or Mr. Fox.

With all this Alicia was unacquainted, but she saw that the Opposition no longer moved in its former formidable phalanx. People who had been inseparable were hardly ever seen in the same sets. Mr. Clairville's society had split itself into so many parts, that Alicia perceived she should require a house of her own to collect them all again. It had been insinuated to her, that her late husband's friends looked upon it, that, by her second marriage, she had forfeited all claim to be considered as his widow; that she had gone into another

family, and given up her former connexions. Her hopes, therefore, centered in C—l—n House. She was advised to send a petition thither; she did so, and was awaiting the effect.

A very tall man who passed by the coach-door roused her from these reflections. He looked full into the carriage, and she shrunk from the careless glance of Lord Frederick Sydney! He passed on without another look. "Even he has forgotten me!" thought Alicia, and she burst into tears. A few paces on, Lord Frederick met some lounging companions. They stopped to speak to him. Alicia threw down her veil, and looked out, to see once more a being who had been dear to her. She gazed through her tears, and thought of all the misery her unfortunate attachment to this man had brought upon her. "I would not," sighed she, "he should ever know all the misery he has done me!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

I will not wish you half my miseries,
I have more charity.

Henry the Eighth.

"YOUR petition has been presented at C—lt—n House," said Mr. Blarney, one morning; and I strongly advise your getting so[illegible]erson to back it. You might ask any one of Clairvi[illegible]s friends to do this; for it is not like asking a favou to remind a person of a thing." Alicia did not see much difference; however, she expressed her willingness to apply to any one Mr. Blarney might point out, but also observed how her first husband's friends were scattered about, and that most of them seemed as effectually out of her reach now she was in town, as they would have been, had she remained in the country. Of those she had been in the habit of seeing, some were dead; some had married, and settled quietly out of town; others were abroad; and, from the different circles in which almost all the rest moved, she might have hunted half London over without seeing them for above a minute. At Lady De La Ville's, indeed, most of them might be found; but Alicia remembered her unanswered letters, and had not spirits to risk calling there.

The day on which Mr. Blarney hinted the necessity of having her petition enforced, there was a good deal of company at dinner; and among others a gentleman who had expressed himself warmly in favour of Alicia's success. According to him, it was impossible the P——

could refuse, if, indeed, he had the matter properly stated to him. Accident, or rather, on the part of the gentleman, design, placed him next to Mrs. De Lancy at table. "Well," thought she, "if he asks me about my concerns, I can say what I now want; and, as he is graciously received in that quarter, he may second my wishes."

The gentleman was not long in getting upon the subject; and Alicia stated how much her hopes had sunk of late, and what advice she had been given. The stranger persisted in his sanguine view of the matter, asked particulars respecting the petition, wished to have a copy of it, and promised to do all he could. Grateful for kindness on which she had no claim, Alicia exerted herself to evince her sense of obligations by attentions, invaluable from a beautiful woman, though scarce observed from a plain one. Hope revived in her breast, and dispersed the wonted languor of her manner.

"Now you deserve to succeed," said Lady C—— to her, as they quitted the dining-room; "I thought you would take my advice at last, and condescend to flatter those who may be useful."

"Condescend to flatter! dear Lady C——, what can you mean? I never flattered any one, that I know of."

"Not often, I know; you need not look so alarmed at my remarking your innocent flirtation with Lord D——. All is fair in these cases, for men's hearts do not break now-a-days—particularly at Lord D——'s."

Alicia's dark eye shot fire, and she clasped her hands with an air of expostulation. Lady C—— smiled good-humouredly, and coldly said, as she turned from her—

"Really, my dear Mrs. De Lancy, you might teach a girl of seventeen to blush."

The fevered flush of indignation faded from Alicia's cheek. "There is no making such a woman as that comprehend one," thought she, and a sentiment of disdain restored her composure. She retired to write the

copy of the petition; when she returned, Lord D—— was taking leave of his hostess; but Alicia not seeing at a distance, did not observe it, till he passed her with a parting bow. She instantly followed him out of the room, and presented him the petition: they were on the landing-place and alone. Lord D—— received the petition, and retaining the fair hand that held it, exclaimed—

"Shall such beauty, born to reign, stoop to sue? The paltry sum you may gain as a favour from the P—— is not worth your acceptance. Three times that —any thing within the limits of a splendid fortune shall be yours, the moment you will accept it. My whole life shall be devoted to you, and in those beautiful eyes will I look for every wish that arises, that I may have the happiness of gratifying it before it be expressed."

His Lordship threw himself into a stage-attitude suited to his speech, (for there is nothing so theatrical as affected passion,) and pressed to his lips the unresisting hand of Alicia. Roused by this action from the stupor that had seized her, Mrs. De Lancy withdrew her hand with more resolution than vehemence, and with a look of mournful dignity, turned away in silence. Still expecting her to speak, he caught the muslin that hung over her shoulders. It remained in his hand, for she did not even stop to disengage it. He gazed after her in wonder, but his hopes revived on seeing her stop with her hand on the drawing-room door.

"Fine woman!" thought his Lordship, as he prepared an answer to what she might say; but it was lost, for Alicia only put her handkerchief to her eyes, and entered the room without looking back. "Well," thought Lord D——, "she is not quite the thing I took her for; but if I have mistaken her, it is not my fault, but that of her situation, and the company I see her in. Thus easily satisfying himself, he was not to blame; he sprung into his carriage, without a single sigh to the misfortunes he had insulted, or one farther thought of how he might alleviate them!

Lady C—— guessed by one look at Alicia's desponding countenance all that had happened. "Do not be discouraged," said she, in a tone of kindness; "I doubt Lord D——'s interest being great, even had he been disposed to try it."

"You are very good," said Mrs. De Lancy, "and, I dare say, very right. I am inured to disappointment, but" (and the rebellious tears would spring in spite of the forced smile) "I am new to insult."

"Now, indeed, Mrs. De Lancy, you take this nonsense too seriously. Quarrel with your own beauty, which occasions such offers; not with the poor men, merely because they don't happen to be born under a star of disinterested generosity."

"You do not, I hope, class all men with Lord D——. Besides, what have I to do with their generosity, or their disinterestedness! If I asked them for any of their own money, they might have some right to propose their own conditions, however brutal and despicable such conduct would always be."

"So long as you want money, and acknowledge that you do, so long will those who have it, think they have a right to offer it in their own way. It is rare that prosperity does not make people presumptuous; how, then, should, they guess at the delicacy of those in adversity."

"After this, I shall never venture to solicit any one's interest for this tiresome pension."

"Well, I can only say," continued Lady C——, with a friendly smile, "I shall be most happy to detain you with me, till you hear something decisive about it. The more I see of you now, or at any future time, the better pleased I shall be; but you must allow me to say, if you suffer such trifles to weigh upon your spirits, you would really be better with your husband, as I understand he is anxious not to lose you,—and he does not beat you, I believe."

Alicia faintly smiled, as she replied, "I do not believe he ever beat any thing in his life."

"Then, seriously, I recommend you to put your dislike in your pocket, see as much company as you can, come and visit me every year for a little change, and the world will take you for Darby and Joan; ay, and you may end by thinking it yourself, for time and habit work miracles in these cases."

"It *would* be a miracle!" said Mrs. De Lancy, but she spoke in so low a tone, that it was like thinking aloud, and Lady C—— thought it was as well to let it pass unnoticed. Another week of expectation dragged on its lingering pace, when a note from Mr. Blarney announced the departure of his Royal Patron for Brighton. Thus perished Alicia's hopes. She read over the note several times, then gave it in silence to Lady C——.

"This is very vexatious," said her Ladyship, glancing her eye across it. "I wonder whether Mr. Blarney ever *did* present the petition, or ever did exert himself about it. He is a very indolent person."

"Yes," said Alicia, with a faint smile, "I know he is; but you must suffer me to believe him a friendly one also. At any rate, I have no claims upon him."

"You have the claim most apt to be attended to," replied Lady C——, "for he is in love with you."

"Not *now*, I should think," calmly returned her guest.

"I perceive, my dear Mrs. De Lancy, you have a natural belief in the benevolence of men, as I have in their selfishness; but I am a good deal older than you, which accounts for it."

Alicia's mind had again reverted to her disappointment, and she heard not Lady C——'s last words. She folded up her note with so deep a sigh, that her hostess began to suspect there must be more than mere dislike of her husband to excite such keen regret at being unable to quit him.

"I wonder," thought her Ladyship, "who she can care for:" and both now having something to consider of, remained silent, until Mrs. Lennox was announced.

This lady was an old maid, such as you see continually —not such as you read of. She never knew any scandal, nor did she ever sit down to cards when any thing better could be done. She surfeited nobody with witty sayings, but she was cheerful, active, and benevolent. She was, unhappily, less independent in fortune than in mind; yet, in the course of a long life, she had been more useful than many who lived in princely splendour.

She had known Mrs. De Lancy when she first married, was delighted with her beauty and softness, and the next moment forgot her existence; for Alicia did not amuse her, and was not in want of her. Now it was quite different; the lustre of her beauty had faded; the gloss of fashion was sullied; she was poor, unfortunate, and forgotten. It would not have been Mrs. Harriet Lennox, if she had not instantly found her out. She was vexed to hear she was at Lady C——'s, and would rather have visited her elsewhere; but when Miss Clairville made some spiteful remark about her mother-in-law's choice of a residence, this lady answered with her usual quickness, "It is, indeed, a sad libel upon all who have followed and flattered the *peerless Alicia*, that not one has had a grain of good-nature, but this very Lady C——, who has deservedly incurred the contempt of all. Decorum may be the first virtue in life, but these well-behaved ladies have proved to us it is not the only one." Lydia was too much in awe of Mrs. H. Lennox to venture upon any other remark; but when she was gone, she made various witty observations on the old maid's defence of such a woman as Lady C——; and Mrs. Morlay, with a blindness of prejudice that overcame her good-nature, applauded her dear girl's high sense of morality.

Alicia, who delighted in the active good-nature of Mrs. H. Lennox, and reverenced her higher qualities, received her with as much pleasure as at that moment she was capable of feeling; but the cloud upon her spirits was evident to her visiter, whose winning manner soon impelled her confidence, in so far, at least, as rela-

ted to herself. Mrs. H. Lennox listened to her plan and its defeat.

"Well," she said, taking the note out of Alicia's hand, and chucking it away, "there is an end of that! There is no use in brooding over a failure; one should try something else, before one's spirits flag: you would really rather do any thing than remain with your husband?"

Mrs. De Lancy made an affirmative gesture.

"Well, then, go with me to Bath. There is a repository for ladies' works. Every one can do ingenious trifles, but few people can paint like you; therefore, of course, you may set almost any price upon your labours. At any rate, try if the sort of thing will do for you. I meant to set out to-morrow, but will delay my journey as long as you please."

"If," said Lady C——, "it did not appear like turning you out of my house, I should recommend you to stay no longer in town, where every thing will remind you of this tiresome disappointment."

"I believe your Ladyship is quite right," said Alicia; "but I shall be a burden to Mrs. Lennox, it is so long a journey."

"Then," returned Mrs. Lennox, "you have only to follow my good example, and sleep all the way. Remember, I don't require you to be agreeable, on condition you have the same indulgence for me."

CHAPTER XXVII.

—— 'Tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow;
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself.

SOUTHEY.

HE next morning Mrs. H. Lennox was at B——
se before Alicia was ready. She wished to hurry
way, and had for that reason named so early a day;
as far as she herself was concerned, it was rather
ıvenient. The extreme despondency of Mrs. De
:y's manner, and the harassed expression of her
res, excited Mrs. Lennox's warmest interest; and
elieved that immediate change of scene would be
likely to be serviceable to her. She knew not that
ia's nerves had been so completely unstrung, that
t she did must be done quietly.
he bustle that succeeded to the withering of her
s, the bitter sensations with which she revisited the
ı to which they were going, the fatigue of a long
ney, performed with the celerity of a robust travel-
all conspired to fever Alicia. For ten days her life
despaired of, and when the indefatigable cares of
. Lennox seemed crowned with success, the invalid
inued too weak to attempt any thing that could pro-
emolument. Business of consequence called away
kind hostess to the north, and Mrs. De Lancy re-
ed to her husband, weaker in mind and body than
n she left him.

De Lancy received her with more triumph than kindness; he seemed to rejoice more in her failure than in her return. He was now continually absent from home. He had, in her absence, formed new acquaintance; he had written some political pamphlets, which, in a country town, gave him more consequence, particularly as they were generally thought to be clever. The Castle was deserted by its inmates, gone in search of the ignis fatuus, pleasure, at some watering-place, and thus the only society Alicia had ever had at S——— was annihilated.

There was "room for meditation even to madness;" but Alicia was not in love with misery. She did not cling to sorrow with the tenaciousness which some wounded spirits betray. She strove to occupy herself, she laboured to take interest in what surrounded her. Like the wretch who vainly struggles with the disease that consumes him, Mrs. De Lancy tried to oppose fortitude to the storm which had already blasted her strength. Sometimes she would smile at the desperate efforts she instinctively made to deceive herself, and conceal from her own heart the weight that had sunk it. "Shall I," thought she, "spend my whole life in idly wrestling with myself?"

She who had formerly delighted in solitude and reflection, or rather reverie, (for a reflecting mind, by showing the danger of both her marriages, would have saved her the evils which had overwhelmed her,) now fled from both. This indolent being was obliged to have recourse to constant motion and employment to drive away thought. At this period of her life, she talked more, she laughed more, than she had ever done; and her husband felt convinced time was operating the change he had expected from it. He left her, however, to come round as she chose, for he was keen on other pursuits.

His amours hitherto had been evanescent, in common with all his other feelings; but they were at present taking a more consistent form. Alicia had parted with

a servant a short time previous to her leaving home on her fruitless expedition, and her husband had in pretty plain terms acknowledged his wish to retain the damsel, and resented that wish having been unattended to. Mrs. De Lancy betrayed no emotion of any kind, for she felt none; but she remained firm to her purpose; and simply, as a matter of morality and example, discharged the girl. When she came home, she learned that Betty had been established, during her absence, as mistress of the house, which accounted for the destruction of furniture, of which she had complained to the housemaid.

This woman had the effrontery to offer herself in her former capacity to Mrs. De Lancy, and as the request was made in her husband's presence, and backed by him, Alicia's dormant indignation was for a moment aroused; one flash of ire from her dark eye silenced De Lancy, and a haughty laconic reply dismissed the insolent Betty; who continued her intercourse with her former master, as she herself confessed, more out of hate to his wife than love to him.

Alicia's prophecy was fulfilling. Her husband, though unwilling to straiten his very narrow circumstances, by giving her the means of support, was occasionally provoked at her not leaving him upon the trifle he offered to give her. This was fifty pounds per annum, which, in no possible way, could she contrive to live upon. She saw she was in his way; a constraint both on his society and his profligacy. She had foreseen all this; she could not therefore wonder, but it kept alive the intense anxiety she had so long had to leave him. Often and often did she turn over in her mind the possibility of living with her mother; but in the first place, she wished to save Mrs. Neville the pang of knowing she was separated from her husband; and in the next place, bad as home was, she scarcely thought it could equal the misery of being under the same roof with Lucy; of daily beholding her she had once so dearly prized, and from whom she was now for ever

estranged. She was begirt with ills, and could turn from one only to fall upon another.

About this time she received a letter from a lady with whom she had been once intimately acquainted. She had lost sight of her many years, for she had married, given up London, and been thrown, in consequence, completely out of that society in which she was likely to hear any thing of Alicia. Accident discovered to her that Mrs. De Lancy had been for nearly three years her neighbour, for Mrs. Saville lived but eighteen miles from S——. She instantly wrote to prepare her for a visit; for so many years had elapsed since they had met, that now, when both bore different names, it was not impossible that, without any previous notice, they might not recognise each other. Alicia's heart beat as she perused the first kind epistle she had received for so long; and she experienced that sort of grateful surprise which the unfortunate feel at being remembered. She lost no time in acknowledging Mrs. Saville's letter, and, in consequence, the first fair day saw this lady at Alicia's door.

It is only those whose sun has set in the gloomy, cheerless void of indifference, who can appreciate the look of kindness, the tone of interest. Alicia had so long felt shut out from all human sympathy, that her feeble lingering pulse again beat with something of life and animation. There was a warmth and energy about Mrs. Saville peculiarly fitted to rouse the languid Alicia, and she saw her, therefore, depart with a degree of regret, keener than she had expected to feel again upon any subject.

Mr. De Lancy had not appeared during the visit. He had known a little of Mrs. Saville before her marriage, and felt rather in awe of her. She disliked his manner; and as frankness was a more natural quality to her than discretion, she allowed him to see her dislike. To overcome this first impression had often been an amusement to him; but he ventured not to attempt it in this instance, for the young lady could be haughty

when she chose it; and her quick dark eye could at any time mark to those around her the distance she chose them to keep. Yet, though De Lancy did not want to see Mrs. Saville, he felt mortified at her making no effort to see him, particularly when he understood she intended to bring her husband over to visit Alicia.

Mrs. De Lancy had so much to say to a person about whom she really felt interested, that she had no time to bring in her own concerns; nor, indeed, did she once think of them, while Mrs. Saville stayed. That lady had, however, hardly quitted her, before she began to consider whether she could be of any use to her in the plan still uppermost in her mind, of quitting her husband. But she had not now a Lady C—— to deal with; and she was aware that Mrs. Saville would not think any reason but the true one forcible enough to allow of so strong a measure. Under almost any circumstances but those in which Alicia stood, her friend would look upon her conduct as a breach of duty to Mr. De Lancy.

"May I tell her the *whole?*" thought Alicia; and the same question recurred again and again, without her being able to answer it. She had gone through so much to rescue her sister's reputation from the danger it had run, that it was being faithless to her own sufferings, to risk it by unnecessary communications. Her temptation to trust Mrs. Saville was strong. She knew the kindness of her heart would prevent her ever being the means of injuring Lucy. She was, besides, scarcely acquainted with any one who knew much of either sister; therefore, there would be no temptation to disclose it: without being fully entrusted with her situation, how could she advise her; how could she ever be useful to her? These reflections occupied Alicia without bringing her to any conclusion.

At last, Mr. and Mrs. Saville came to the inn, and sent to hope Alicia would dine with them. She arrived there more nervous than ever: dreading to let an oppor-

tunity escape from which so much good might accrue; yet, recoiling from the relation of sorrows that had for so long been confined to her own breast. "I wonder," thought she, "what sort of a man this husband of hers is? I shall never venture to speak before a stranger."

She found only Mrs. Saville and her niece, a young girl who had accompanied her aunt on their first visit. Presently, Mr. Saville joined them; and Alicia breathed more freely, when she beheld in this formidable stranger, a quiet, gentlemanlike man, who seemed not less kind than his wife, for being vastly less energetic. When they sat down to dinner, Mrs. Saville marked with dismay the various nervous symptoms visible in her friend. She pressed her to eat, and would not believe that the impossibility of swallowing any thing but liquids, of which Alicia complained, was more than imaginary. Mrs. De Lancy made the attempt to satisfy her, was almost strangled, and obliged to leave the room.

"Have you asked no advice? Have you done nothing for this?" asked Mrs. Saville.

"I have asked advice, and am told only, that my throat is gradually contracting: so, I suppose, some day or other, it will close altogether. I swallow sometimes with less difficulty; but when I dine out, the idea of choking makes me nervous, and I never venture to run the risk."

This seemed very strange and very alarming to Mrs. Saville, but she did not want to terrify her friend, if nothing could be done, so she asked no more questions.

The cloth had been removed and the servants withdrawn some time, before Alicia found courage to begin her communication. Mrs. Saville's wish to see her at her own house; the inquiries she made after Mrs. and Miss Neville; a thousand unconscious observations had led to the subject, from which Mrs. De Lancy continued to shrink. When at last she began her relation, which strong emotion so often interrupted, she was listened to with more than sympathy, for her audience resented the

evil of which she spoke in a two-fold manner; first, from a sense of moral indignation, and secondly, from compassion for the unfortunate victim. All the misery that had come gradually upon Alicia was presented to their view in one short hour.

The ebullition of their feelings, therefore, appeared stronger than hers: her eye, though not her heart, was familiarized with a picture on which she had long dwelt; but it was all new to them; and they started from the canvass with horror, for the strong colourings of anguish and guilt glared upon them at one glance. It was indeed a tale which wanted not the tears of injured innocence, of gentle loveliness, or the still more powerful stimulus of their own imaginations, to rouse every spark of feeling within their breasts. It was told, too, with so much simplicity, so much benevolence! Misfortune had oppressed her, but without souring her temper: and she did not, during her whole recital, revert to her own feelings; they were marked enough by the broken voice, the look of misery. She used no gesture, no emphatic expression, no exaggerated idea, but silently the tears streamed over her pale cheeks, and they were such frequent visitors they fell unheeded!

When she had got so far as her quitting Devonshire, and her determination to leave her husband, which as yet she had found impossible to execute, Mr. Saville waited not to hear her trials and their failure, but immediately entreated Mrs. De Lancy would come to him.

"I ask you not to *my* house," he said, "lest there you might not feel independent; I shall only hope to see you there whenever your health and spirits allow of your joining us; but I have a farm-house, in which are two apartments capable of being made comfortable, and which you must allow me to look upon as yours. Come to us instantly; it will be a separate home, in which you will be complete mistress; and the occasional pleasure of your society, whenever you feel disposed to give it, will more than reward us for any imaginary trouble." As

a stranger, though one warmly interested for you, you might feel uncomfortable at acceding to my wish; but surely you will not refuse my wife! She is your old friend, and will, you well know, rejoice in an opportunity of being useful to you."

Mrs. Saville, whose utterance had been impeded by the violence of her emotion, joined her entreaties to her husband's with a vehemence which is irresistible when we believe it to be sincere. Alicia's grateful heart repaid the kindness sevenfold. She agreed to speak immediately to her husband respecting the promised allowance, and as soon as possible to establish herself at Mr. Saville's farm. That gentleman accompanied her home, for it was now late; and as he saw at a distance the cheerful light glimmer through the trees that clustered round her beautiful cottage, he could scarcely believe thet it spoke in vain of gaiety and comfort.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

——— She's noble born,
And, like her true nobility, she has
Carried herself towards me.

Henry the Eighth.

De Lancy heard with surprise and consternation of the asylum offered his wife. It seemed a most unlikely offer to be made without the knowledge of the circumstances which induced Alicia to wish it. He did not venture to ask her what she had said, but his nervous agitated manner betrayed his dread of its being every thing. Alicia, who could not bear to see any thing suffer, and who, in the hope of quickly leaving her husband, was more disposed to be kind to him, asked the Savilles and their niece to drink tea with them on the ensuing evening, and begged they would quiet Mr. De Lancy upon this subject, by treating him as they would have done, had they heard nothing of his conduct.

Mr. Saville, calm and well-bred, who had often met with people he could neither admire nor esteem, promised without hesitation. His wife at first rather made a wry face at this appearance of dissimulation, but seeing her friend earnest about it, promised "to try." Luckily, her niece was thought too young for her manner to signify, as she could never have promised to pay the commonest debt of civility to a being who, in the warmth of her high-flown indignation, she thought contaminated the pure air of heaven by breathing it.

Preparations were made without delay at the farm for Mrs. De Lancy's reception, nor was she long in taking advantage of them. A low phaeton, which Mrs. Saville drove, was sent for her guest part of the way, but from S—— she was to come in a coach, which set out early in the morning. The noise and confusion preceding her departure did not induce her husband to rise. Alicia went gently into his dressing room, to deposit there some drawings of her doing he had often begged her to give him when she quitted him. As she laid them down, she saw a pencil on the table, and yielding to the impulse of present feeling, she wrote, "Drawn by a woman, once Mrs. Clairville, then Mrs. De Lancy, and now—*a blank*."

Eager as Alicia was to quit her own home, and rejoiced, as, in fact, she was, at so eligible an opportunity occurring of doing it with respectability, she did not the less feel she was going to eat the bread of dependence; and that, by voluntarily abandoning her husband, she lost her footing in society. She had been made to feel in London the value of a husband's protection, and now that she was casting it off for ever, she *did* feel herself a blank.

Mr. and Mrs. Saville received her in the kindest possible manner. They continually watched over her comfort without oppressing her with attentions; and relieved from the weight that had so long pressed upon her, she shortly recovered a more natural tone of spirits. Solitude was still her enemy, and she encouraged, therefore, the continual visits of Mrs. Saville's niece Mary, whose youth relieved Alicia from all ceremony and efforts at amusing her, while she felt gratified at the unbounded admiration and lively sympathy this young girl evidently felt for her.

When De Lancy arose the day his wife left him, he wandered through every empty apartment, in which an air of desolation seemed to reign, vainly seeking her, whose still interesting loveliness, unaltered mildness, and exquisite taste, had hitherto shed a charm on all

around her. He went last to his own room, for no traces of his once loved wife were to be found there, where she never came. He instantly perceived the drawings, and shed fresh tears at this proof of her remembrance. He gazed at them one by one, recalling the different periods at which they had been sketched; but when his eye met the pencilled lines, but just written, he was miserable beyond description or belief. He wept, he raved, he wrote to her, then burnt his letters, as feeble and unpersuasive, then accused his actions, and cursed his fate.

When this burst of grief had quite subsided, he succeeded in writing a coherent letter—he spoke of himself with the horror he at that moment felt; he extolled the uniform excellence of her conduct. He earnestly implored her to return—not for one error, dreadful as it might be, to make his whole life miserable, for his love for her could cease but with life. He assured her that *he* was the *blank;* the deserted being who had no friend to turn to, no home to cheer him.

Alicia wept over this effusion of high-wrought temporary feeling—she replied, "Had your letter reached me two hours after you had written it, I should have returned instantly, and tried that influence which you say is so great to comfort you. But I know you—I am aware that in less time than the expression of your feelings could reach me, they had ceased to exist. I do not doubt their sincerity, but experience has shown me their evanescence. Should any one of them survive three days, write to me—and though I do not promise to remain with you, I will visit you, and try to prove (what I really believe) that you are better without me."

To this Mrs. De Lancy received no answer; she had judged rightly, and a few hours had worked the usual change in her versatile husband.

Removed from the situation that had kept up the constant irritation of her wounded feelings, thrown into new society, where nothing was known of her since her marriage, or previous to it, Mrs. De Lancy was in a

new world. Gratified with attention, still willing to please, eager to lose in momentary forgetfulness the inward cares that preyed upon her, she courted every trivial amusement—were not all good that could drown thought? This reasoning, or rather, this instinct of misery, that was fain to clothe itself in every faint resemblance of joy, was perfectly incomprehensible to Mary. The purity, the benevolence, the magnanimity of Alicia, had excited all her enthusiasm. She worshipped that noble simplicity of character that taught her to undervalue all she had done for her sister, and to believe that no other line of conduct was possible.

There was so much dignity in grief so deep, yet so gentle; so much fascination in indulgence that had been so severely tasked, that Mary thought their beautiful guest something above humanity; and with the exaggerated feelings of youth and inexperience, she shuddered as she marked the first smile on those lovely features, for she thought the effort must be dreadful! With wonder amounting to consternation, did she see her apparent interest in trifles, and inwardly she exclaimed, "How can the same mind be at once so great and so little?" Her attention to outward appearance was a sort of sacrilege in the eyes of her young friend; who, with the pride of human nature, was disposed to undervalue advantages she knew herself not to possess, and was honestly ignorant of the influence of beauty, because she herself had no pretensions to it. It was, she thought, a casualty, which, as you owed it to no merit of your own, appeared to her beneath the consideration of a rational being, and necessarily to be forgotten, with every other trifle, by a suffering one.

Mary lived to acknowledge beauty to be a gift so earnestly to be desired, that scarcely any sacrifice would have appeared to her too great to purchase it, if by any means it could be purchased! Perhaps this was but another aberration of a mind ever in extremes. Be this as it may, the conviction came not till many years after she first knew Mrs. De Lancy; and with difficulty could

she now repress the scorn rising in her breast, as she beheld the importance attached by Alicia to the choice of a gown, or the colour of a ribbon.

"It is almost as good to be a fool as to appear one!" would she mutter to herself, as she turned indignantly from such weighty consultations. The mere gratification of feminine taste, independent of any vanity, was out of Mary's calculation, who had none naturally; and had as yet learned to apply the word to little else but a fine landscape, or a well-coloured picture. Taste in a cap, she would have thought a milliner's expression, and perfectly ludicrous.

A companion so little suited to Alicia could not well have been met with, yet they apparently found pleasure in each other's society, for they were hardly ever apart. Indeed, Mrs. De Lancy's face was "as a book where men might read strange matters," and Mary scanned it with almost as much wonder as interest. She carefully put together all she told of her story or her feelings, and studied to comprehend a character that bewildered her, while she admired it. Alicia was gratified by the ready sympathy of her young companion, and amused by the constant difference of their opinion and sentiments in all that related not to feeling.

Even in that they soon found they disagreed; for one day, when Mrs. De Lancy asked if there was any thing in the papers, Mary, with the childish love of the horrible, related an act of suicide committed by a young woman. She did not then know the tragical end of Mr. Clairville, and she expressed her contempt and abhorrence of such unhallowed deeds, in the unguarded and unqualified terms of presumptuous ignorance. She soon repented her heedlessness, when she found she had unconsciously wounded where most she wished to soothe. Alicia vehemently defended the act itself, and applauded the resolution that could execute it.

When Mary had once got the key to such unfeminine declarations, her wonder diminished. She forgave the superstitious feeling which sanctified errors a lost friend

had inculcated, but she shuddered over those errors; and while horror checked her admiration for the beautiful unfortunate, who thus wilfully fled from the only "altar where human misery weeps, and is comforted," her commiseration was increased to a painful height, as she looked in vain for something to soften her lot.

"Ah!" thought Mary, as in solitude and tears she reconsidered a conversation that had petrified her, "no wonder that, like a drowning wretch, she clings to every straw. Are not all things alike unstable to her? She is without consolation. The voice of Heaven tells of comfort, but she hears it not. The arm of the Almighty supports the children of dust, and she feels it not. How can such misery be borne? or who may look for its termination? Poor desolate one! thou art alone in Heaven as in earth!" Mary, from this hour, felt no impatience at what she deemed the foibles of their guest. Engrossed by one feeling, she mourned over her alike in the hour of temporary cheerfulness, and in that of depression and grief.

She carefully avoided recurring to a topic that had chilled her; for Mary knew she could argue only on subjects that did not interest her, and this was too serious a one to be lightly or imperfectly handled. She ventured not to mar so just a cause by lame reasonings, but earnestly, almost confidently, did she hope, the same mercy that had hitherto restrained Alicia, though all unknown to herself, from self-destruction, would, in the appointed time, lead her to the faith from which she had wandered.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Then gently scan your brother man,
  Still gentler, sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
  To step aside is human.
Who made the heart? 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us.

BURNS.

THE first intelligence that Lucy Neville received of her sister's long-fixed determination of leaving Mr. De Lancy, was not till Alicia had been some weeks the inhabitant of Mr. Saville's farm. Then, and not till then, did the past appear to her in its true light. "I have broken my sister's heart!—I have sent her forth a wanderer among strangers!" In these two sentences, which Lucy repeated over and over again to herself, did she find a constant source of misery and remorse. As some sudden shock sobers the most intoxicated person, and effectually destroys his false spirits, so this heavy and unexpected flow of gaiety Lucy had now turned the constitutional doubt, and anxiety, had momentarily enjoyed, which fear, the accusing voice of conscience only checked, but which it is the nature of man to judge of alone annihilate. quences. We know the effect better by its conse- and almost in spite of ourselves we suffer the cause, reason to be overpowered. our better

Miss Neville's conduct was scarcely acknowledged herself to be guilt, while she could hope it had done little mischief. Now, it glared upon her in its true colours, and she wondered at her criminal blindness to it.

Had the disclosure of her shame brought her venerable parent to that grave on whose brink she hovered; had it produced in her sister some act of desperation, her remorse would have been so much keener, her self-condemnation so much more vehement: nor could any one have persuaded her that the *cause* remained the same, equally to be condemned, whether a merciful Providence softened its effects, or an avenging one forced her to drain to its very dregs the cup of retribution. Alas! we learn to know ourselves only when the thunder of the Lord is heard. So long as the sun shines on our horizon, so long we detect not the darkness in our hearts.

Lucy was now a prey to grief as severe as it was unavailing. In the spirit of penitence, she addressed her sister, not anxious to be soothed by her indulgence—for the season of self-deceit was past—but willing to embrace the penance severest to a proud spirit, of humbling herself before one better than herself, one whom she had injured! The mind that has once begun to prey upon itself, is fertile in expedients for fresh sufferings. Lucy read her punishment in the slightest circumstances, which would, in any other frame of thought, have escaped her notice. She, whose impatient spirit, and spurn-
erto brooked no control, however legitimately deserved,
ed the faintest semblance of reproof, with eager haste;
now bent to the wish of all around, quiescence of a natu-
not, indeed, with the cheerful, the rigid, unreserved obe-
rally yielding mind, but with
dience of mournful hu[illegible]y.

A few days only she had heard of Alicia's present
abode, a dog of sister's accidentally bit her.

"Has he[illegible] you, my love?" asked Mrs. Neville,
alarmed [illegible]eing her draw her hand quickly away.

"N[illegible]a'am," returned Lucy calmly, "he has done
rig[illegible] He is my sister's dog."

"But I am sure," exclaimed Mrs. Neville, with more than usual quickness, "if your sister was here, she would not let her dog bite you."

Lucy tried to smile while she caressed the dog, for

she did not dare follow her own meaning, nor had she resolution to reply carelessly to her mother's.

A few months of quiet had restored Mrs. De Lancy's health so much, that her kind friends congratulated her upon her looks, and tried to persuade themselves the unfavourable symptoms they had observed were nervous, and would subside of themselves; but the disease lay too deep, and baffled every attempt at cure. This renovating vigour, however, almost deceived Alicia herself, who had so long felt she was dying; and to her sister she of course exaggerated both her health and spirits. Winter was now drawing on, and Mrs. De Lancy expected to pass it beneath the same lowly but hospitable roof in which she had spent the summer. She delighted in calling it "my home;" though, in fact, she was less there than at Mr. Saville's own habitation. She liked the society she met with; it could not boast perhaps, in general, of that brilliancy of fashion or genius which had charmed Alicia on her first entrance into life; but she was become less fastidious than formerly, and had been sufficiently inured to neglect, to receive kindness with real pleasure.

It was at this period that she received a letter from Lucy, dictated by Mrs. Neville, whose constant anxiety to see her favourite daughter increased with her increasing infirmities. Both Alicia and Lucy had hitherto quieted her by vague promises which neither of them expected to see realized. She was rendered doubly impatient at present, for the rapid loss of her sight, which had not for many years been strong, served to mark time with a precision of which she had hitherto been incapable.

"Come quickly, my child," she said to Alicia, "if you would not deprive your old mother of the blessing of again beholding you. If you delay much longer, I shall be quite blind. Come, then, while I can *see you.*"

To return again to Devonshire was what Mrs. De Lancy had firmly resolved against, but this letter shook

her resolution. She felt that if she once left the protection of Mr. and Mrs. Saville, she should lose all right to claim it again. She had hoped never again to have beheld scenes fraught with such bitter remembrances. She recalled all she had gone through when last there, and vehemently she exclaimed, while the big tears rolled over her cheeks, "I cannot face this again! Have I escaped one scene of misery but to throw myself headlong into another?" Then she thought of the penitence and despondency of Lucy; of the state of utter helplessness to which total blindness would reduce Mrs. Neville, and she asked herself—

"Have I a right to desert my mother? When has her kindness ceased, or her indulgence failed me? And shall I reward her undeviating affection by neglect and desertion? I have abandoned my husband—I did it upon principle; but my poor mother has not dissolved the ties of duty that bind me to her. If I abandon her too, it will not be upon principle, but from selfish feeling. My poor mother! she has not deserved this from me!" Alicia resolved and re-resolved, then drowned her resolution in tears. Her friends, who were too much interested in her comfort, to be troubled with any great sympathy for her mother or sister, warmly pressed her to remain with them, and she had every inclination to yield; but there was an instinctive generosity about Alicia that made it painful and unnatural to her to prefer herself to others. She became uneasy and restless: another summons decided her. To Mary's eager remonstrances, she replied—

"I no longer flatter myself with the hope of giving pleasure to any one, but I will not therefore give pain. I should not wish even to hurt my sister by my reiterated refusal, still less my mother, whom I should be most ungrateful were I to grieve in the last years of her life. In early youth I neglected her; I will atone for it now. Whether I suffer a little more, or a little less, does not signify; but I could never forgive myself if I made her suffer."

"Alas!" thought Mary, as she averted her tearful eyes, "that happiness should not be the necessary meed of such a mind! that one withering error should mar so much excellence, and make it useless to its owner's comfort!"

Experience had at last taught Mrs. De Lancy all the evil of poverty; and before she fixed the day of her departure, she wrote to Mrs. Lennox, to ask if she could dispose of any of her drawings. That lady's answer was favourable; but she hinted that they would more gladly receive at the Repository japan-works, which were at that time just beginning to be the fashion. Alicia had never even seen them done; but Mrs. Saville, who was an adept in that unnatural style of painting, readily and gladly showed her guest all she knew of it.

"By the time I have learned it," said Mrs. De Lancy, with that despondency of feeling so natural to her situation, "it will cease to be the fashion."

Mrs. Saville brushed the gold-dust off her flower with a velocity that destroyed her work, and in a cheering accent replied, "Then something equally easy will be the fashion: you will have all the amusement of variety; for, with your genius in every branch of drawing, nothing can be difficult to you."

Alicia, at that moment bending under an oppression of spirits, felt as if every thing was difficult; yet she smiled gratefully on her friend, for she was not insensible to her kindness.

When the day of departure arrived, every one repeated, what no one thought, that they should soon meet again. It is said by our best modern poet—

> "Her lips refused to send—Farewell!
> For in that word—that fatal word—howe'er
> We promise, hope, believe, there breathes despair."

But in this instance none did deceive themselves. The Savilles wept over an interesting, lovely creature, sink-

ing rapidly into her grave, whose last days would be spent in a situation they thought dreadful. Alicia knew that, should her lingering life be prolonged, she would not again behold those kind friends, who, like a rainbow in the storm, had shot across her gloomy path one stream of cheering light. Her tears of gratitude were mingled with the regret of never being able to prove that gratitude; and some few drops fell in memory of the peace she had found beneath their roof—a peace that was never likely again to soothe her. Yet, upon the whole, the sorrow of Alicia was less painful than that of her friends. Her tears added to their emotion, but theirs invigorated her. In the depth of gratitude there is doubtless joy; that she was beloved and regretted, was an assurance that raised her drooping spirits. "It may be," thought she, as the carriage, rolling rapidly past well-known objects, struck into a road strange to her, "that I shall see them no more—but if they love me—if they remember me—" she covered her face, and yielded to her early habits of reverie.

Mrs. De Lancy had full leisure to think of the friends she quitted, and the relations she was to join. She met with no inconvenience beyond that of changing carriages, which was new to her: although travelling alone, unattended, and paying rather according to the narrowness of her means, than the profuseness of her disposition, she received no incivility, though, at times, she for a moment wondered at neglect, and then smiled at her own wonder. On the third day of her journey she was stopped for want of horses. She was so near home, that the delay was provoking. On examining the state of her purse, which the kindness of Mr. Saville had furnished for the journey, (with the yet kinder observation to Alicia's wounded pride, that it was no favour, since in some way, and at some time most convenient to her, she should repay him,) she found it *more* than provoking, another night's expenses at an inn would leave her pennyless. At this moment the mail drove up.

"Can I not," said Mrs. De Lancy to the waiter, "get a seat there?"

"I will inquire, Ma'am," replied he, unmoved by her eager tone, and with unquickened motion continuing to sweep up the hearth.

"Will he never have done!" thought Alicia impatiently; but she looked at her slender purse, and forbore to urge him.

As the waiter did not return, she began to fear her wish was forgotten, and ventured to ring the bell.

"The coach is full of gentlemen, Ma'am—no room at all; Ma'am," were the waiter's first words.

"Stop, Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. De Lancy, laying her hand on the door he was rapidly closing; "if there are only gentlemen, perhaps, if I could speak—"

The waiter smiled, and opening the door wide, which gave a view of the coach and its occupiers, he said, "The gentlemen are all there, Ma'am."

Alicia, who had intended only to send a message, though her confusion of ideas prevented her expressing herself clearly, at first shrunk back. But resuming her courage—"What are these strangers to me?" thought she; "whether their refusal be rude or civil, it is more their concern than mine." She advanced to the coach-window; the pride of early days came over her, and she half smiled in scorn at her own situation. Mildly she addressed the person nearest her; she represented her anxiety to get on; her willingness to pay any gentleman, who was not in a hurry, for post-horses to the next stage, as soon as they should come in; her fear of travelling outside, fine as the day was; which presented a fine hint to the travellers, who had probably every one of them gone as often on the outside of a coach as in the inside. But they were not disposed to take hints.

The person to whom she had principally addressed herself, shoved a travelling-cap off his brows, and after regaling his eyes with an entire examination of Mrs. De Lancy's face, leisurely replied to all her observations: first, that he was sorry she was in a hurry, as she could

not get on; secondly, that *he* was *not*, or ever had been, to his knowledge, in his life, but that he had paid for his place, and it suited him to keep it; and thirdly, that he was rheumatic, and afraid of coming showers.

Disappointed, yet half inclined to smile, Alicia turned her eloquent eyes on his companions. One of them, as fearful of being persuaded, took refuge from their bright rays in apparent slumber; a third coughed, and shook his head; and the fourth, who had hitherto been been lost in admiration of the alabaster hand of the fair petitioner, which rested on the coach-door, and on which glittered a small diamond ring, relict of former times, now assured her he *was* in a hurry—for his wife was waiting dinner for him. Alicia bowed in silence, and retired. "Well," thought she, "I am out of luck, not to meet one civil man out of four." As the words rose to her mind, the door opened, and bowing, scraping, and scratching his head, entered a working man in the undress of his profession, for he was a smith. His intentions were more gracious than his appearance, for he came to offer his gig to Mrs. De Lancy, and assured her that his brother, though but "a bit lad," would drive her carefully. Alicia most readily and thankfully accepted the offer, and that very night saw her arrive at her mother's door.

CHAPTER XXX.

——————— Folks prone to teasing,
Say things at first because they're pleasing;
Then prove what they have once asserted,
Nor care to have their lie deserted;
Till their own dreams at length deceive 'em,
And oft repeating, they believe 'em. PRIOR.

THE frosty night air had seized Mrs. De Lancy's limbs, and when she got out of the open carriage, in which she was so little accustomed to travel, she could scarcely, with Lucy's help, reach the arm-chair in which Mrs. Neville sat, eager to give the maternal embrace. In a few days she became less helpless; but even in that mild climate, she felt that winter was fast stealing from her the strength she had acquired in summer. She paid, however, little attention to symptoms of decay in herself, solely occupied with her mother, whose increasing debility made her dread that dissolution was at hand.

In a few weeks Mrs. Neville totally lost the little sight with which she had hailed her darling daughter; she could scarcely move before, and her blindness made her now unwilling to try. To dress, feed, and attend upon her, was full employment for one person; but Lucy still found time to fulfil her other avocations. Often before the light was admitted to the apartment of her mother and sister, Miss Neville had walked to the neighbouring village, to procure those articles of consumption which so small a family required daily; often had she carried to some attentive acquaintance

a present from their little garden which her own hands cultivated.

Alicia, meantime, pursued her employment of drawing, from which she fondly flattered herself emolument might arise, with indefatigable care. She could watch her mother, read to her, and try to amuse her; but she could not be of the same use with the strong and active Lucy. Often as Mrs. De Lancy saw her sister's light figure bend with the fatigue of wheeling their mother to the sun, and marked on her sunken cheek the lines, not of age, but care, did tears of every mingled feeling spring to her eyes. "Poor Lucy!" thought she, "you wear away a heavy life: and when we both leave you, as we soon must, what future evils may not await you! I have had much to struggle with—alas! that you should have more!"

Since Mrs. Neville's entire blindness, her daughters were anxious to amuse her by a little society. A visit to Mrs. Neville was not a necessary ceremony which she eagerly shook off; it was not a waste of *her* time, to whom time itself was useless; it was really an act of charity, for it was her sole amusement, and thus became also a comfort to her daughters. Lucy, still more than her sister, had, in her father's lifetime, thought morning visiters the most tiresome things imaginable—she had then plenty of them.

Now that she looked eagerly, day after day, from their little porch, in hopes of descrying a stranger, (she scarcely cared whom,) no one came. Their society had never, since their removal into Devonshire, been very numerous; but Mrs. De Lancy had visited a good many people, and Miss Neville hoped her sister's presence might again prove an attraction to them. It seemed, however, to be the reverse; for scarcely a single visiter had cheered Mrs. Neville since Alicia's arrival. They at first attributed this to the season, unfavourable to distant excursions; but they soon learned there were other causes. When once an unfavourable report gains any ground, however soon it may be checked, there re-

mains always a willingness to believe ill of the suspected persons.

Thus it was with the Nevilles. Mrs. De Lancy's efforts saved her sister's fame, but injurious rumours once afloat were not easily forgotten. As no possible fault could be found with Lucy, since the first suspicions, the spirit of censure was directed to her innocent sister. The immorality of leaving her husband was loudly insisted upon; she was made accountable for every act of profligacy on his part; and it was positively asserted, that after finding it very practicable to live eight years with Mr. De Lancy, she was not likely to quit him on the ninth of her own accord, and therefore that he must have turned her out of the house for reasons best known to himself.

Although these accusations were contradictory, they failed to destroy one another; and the general impression was, that it would be advisable not to visit a woman separated from her husband under circumstances known with certainty to no one. Accident discovered all this to Alicia, who checked both her indignation and her grief, fearful of adding to her sister's self-reproach. As she was, however, sensibly alive to these expressions, she wrote to Mrs. Saville with an energy she seldom felt.

"In the utter overthrow of all my hopes of happiness, one good yet remained to me,—a good I fondly hoped could not be taken from me. Even that is now become uncertain, and with every other comfort, I have outlived the dearest, the most essential of all characters." She then proceeded to request an introduction to some of those travellers, known to Mr. or Mrs. Saville, whom the mild air of that country induced to winter there.—Among these, the most distinguished in rank and consequence, as in talent, was Lady Janet Moray. Her only daughter had been ordered there in a deep decline; and although Lady Janet had always been known to prefer her two boys, she was not less eager to preserve this fair creature from an untimely grave. Mr. Moray,

who idolized this child, eagerly sought to amuse her, and was glad to cultivate the acquaintance of old Mrs. Neville, whose two daughters were so pleasant an addition to their society. Miss Moray lingered through the winter, and enjoyed the early flowers that bloomed in Mrs. Neville's garden; but the balmy breath of spring failed to renovate her, and while all things else sprung afresh into existence, she relinquished hers. Her afflicted parents soon quitted a spot so sad to them, and Alicia bade adieu to Lady Janet with unfeigned regret and sympathy.

A short time before the Morays quitted Devonshire, Alicia's exhausted frame had undergone another revolution. Seated at her eternal drawing, she scarcely marked the increased difficulty she found in walking; but one day, she discovered, with dismay, that the numbness had crept to her fingers. While she was regretting this to her sister, she fell from her chair in a state of insensibility. Lucy raised her in great alarm. But the physician, who was summoned, assured her there was no immediate danger, although it was not likely she should ever recover the entire use of her limbs.

Time unhappily verified this prediction, and Alicia, who had flown to share her sister's task, of nursing their venerable parent, now, with keen regret, found herself a burden upon that sister, whose exertions already almost surpassed her strength.

Lucy Neville, who had from her infancy determined, as it were, not to suffer, and, by the force of her lively spirits, had driven from her many a sorrow, before which her more sensitive sister bowed,—she, who had successfully struggled with destiny, and put away thought, was now borne down under an accumulation of misery. Yet it was no outward misfortune that thus altered the once fearless, careless daughter of Captain Neville. Poverty broke not her spirit; decay and desolation wasted not her powers. Deep in the recesses

of her heart lay the corroding care that lent its sting to every fresh sorrow.

The perpetual play of fancy, the brilliant colouring of imagination, which had so often delighted her stern father, had given place to one dreadful reality—the consciousness of guilt. Feeling as under the immediate chastisement of Heaven, she became simple and calm. In the spirit of true contrition, she went forth to meet the crosses that were sent; and content to bear a burden she considered as too light for her offences, she sought only to lessen its weight to others.

Alicia laboured to comprehend her much-altered sister. In the proud consciousness of innocence, Mrs. De Lancy could oppose a sort of pagan fortitude to calamity. Noble and high-minded she was; and, from elevated and sublime sentiments, she could cheat herself into stoic tranquillity. Yet deeply had she sometimes felt the insufficiency of earthly reasoning; and often, in the silent hour of night, when the unfortunate wake to weep—to weep undisturbed and alone, had she confessed the noblest lesson of philosophy to be without power as without consolation! From her own pure mind she drew her horror of guilt; from her lofty spirit of honour, she could guess what the soul, bowed down with shame, must feel; and beholding the frantic hand of despair checking a sullied existence, she almost felt, with ancient Rome, that thus honour could be again redeemed.

Perceiving how thoroughly alive Miss Neville now was to the criminality of her former conduct, she trembled for her. Eagerly she sought to soften the irritation of compunctious visitings, and to soothe by tenderness the wildness of desperation. With wonder, she found there was nothing but cankering grief to combat. Every stirring passion was lulled to rest by the magic touch of Christian humility; and Lucy had ceased to feel but for others. The deep repentance of Lucy wounded her sister: and it was long, very long, before she was forced to acknowledge that her sole consolation sprung from it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

[Part of a letter from Mr. Stanley to his mother.]

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"Having thus given you an account of my wife's progress towards convalescence, I can now tell you I have found the family, to whom you desired me to show every possible attention; but at a moment, I should fear, when attention will rather be troublesome than gratifying. We fell upon Mrs. Neville's cottage by accident; for, on the first few days of our arrival in Devonshire, I was more eager to see my invalid recover the fatigue of her long journey, than anxious to seek after people I scarcely remembered. I had taken Maria on the water; and, as we glided smoothly on a calm sea, and close to the shore, we turned the angle of a rock, which concealed from us a fairy residence, such, as in my youthful days of romance, I have often sighed for. Although now converted to the advantages of a large house, with an honest roof, not likely to catch fire, I could not help admiring the lowly thatched cot, which was at once wild enough for poetry, and neat enough for comfort. Struck with its beauty and picturesque situation, Maria asked to whom it belonged: and, on hearing the name of Neville, I determined to delay my visit no longer.

"Learning that the old mother was blind and superannuated, and concluding neither of the daughters would remember me, I wrote them a line, previous to my visit, and receiving a polite reply, with kind speeches about you, I called the next morning. When I was last

at home, if you remember, Captain Neville was alive; thought to be a very rich man, and severely censured for not making some settlement upon his favourite daughter, who had just married for the second time. I recollect my poor father preferred 'the beauty,' as she was called; and you patronised the little merry one, who was as playful as a kitten, and was certainly a relieving contrast to her sister's languor.

"It is very difficult to persuade oneself that time does not stand still. I rung at Mrs. Neville's rustic porch, almost expecting to find every body as I had last seen them. Although I could not expect the same splendour, either from the appearance of their present habitation, or from my knowledge of their pecuniary losses; I still felt hurt and surprised, at the tardy appearance of a ragged child, who, with some hesitation and alarm at a stranger, answered my question, by the assurance that her mistress was *always* at home. She left the door open, and me to find my way as I could. Guided by the faint tones of a plaintive voice of peculiar softness, I turned to my left, and knocked at a door, which a tall pale girl immediately opened to me. Whether she remembered me, or only guessed who I was from my note, I cannot say; but she addressed me by name, and going close up to her mother, who appeared to sleep in an easy chair, she said—

"'Here is your kind neighbour's son, Mr. Stanley, come to see you.'

"'He is very good,' murmured the old woman; 'I hope Mrs. Stanley is well. I don't think she comes to see me as often as she used.'

"I made some unmeaning reply, and bowed to the beautiful Alicia, who is now, indeed, the beautiful wreck. There was a deep silence, which I had not courage to break; for there was something dreadful, unnatural and appalling in the alteration that so few years had produced in these three women. I went to the window, for I felt as if I could not breathe. Lucy was working at it, and looked up at my approach, to make some remark

on their beautiful prospect. I believe it was lovely, but I could not look at it; and unconsciously I said—

"'Is it then so *very* long since we parted?'

"As if eager to call off my attention from her sister, Mrs. De Lancy hastily replied, 'Time is measured differently by every one. You, I hope, have had no cause to think it long;' then, as if she did not wish a reply, she spoke of you, asked after all their old neighbours, and, with an appearance of still greater interest, after the beautiful oaks that stand before the house. I followed her lead, and conversed upon indifferent subjects, while Lucy remained silent, and intent upon her work.

"In spite of the rapidity with which her fingers moved, she saw every thing in the room, for she continually moved to arrange her mother's pillows, or fetch something for her sister. While Mrs. De Lancy was speaking, the wicket-gate at the end of the garden swung; she looked towards the window, and Lucy replied to the look, "Yes, it is he."

"Both sisters seemed pleased, and I was a little curious to know wherefore; when the door opened, and the Reverend Vicar stood before us; reverend as much from his years and high character, as from his sacred profession. He bowed from habit, as it were, to Mrs. Neville, who could not see the mark of respect, while to me he only bent his head slightly, on our introduction. He sat down on the couch where Mrs. De Lancy was reclined, and deliberately putting on his spectacles, he took up the book Alicia had laid down upon my entrance.

"'Paley's Sermons,' he said aloud; 'good, very good;' and replaced them without farther comment. Miss Neville entered with refreshments, which she offered me, after having first presented them to their venerable visiter. I arose, and she looked surprised at the unlooked-for courtesy—has she already forgotten the attention that was once paid her?

"'I hardly expected you to-day,' said Mrs. De Lancy to the clergyman.

"'*I* hardly expected to come,' he replied; 'I was obliged to be present at the reading of Mrs. Selwyn's will.'

"'And is she dead, then!' exclaimed Alicia; 'Good God! what will become of her destitute orphans! How she must have suffered at leaving them!'

"With an air approaching to sternness, the venerable priest replied, 'She knew in whose hands she left them. Her faith was not an empty name; and, as she believed, she was supported.'

"Alicia bowed with an air of the most touching humility to the reproof, and her sister turned away her tearful eyes with the first look of animation I had seen her wear.

"Fearful of leaving Maria too long, I took my leave; but could not shake off the melancholy with which this visit impressed me. The picture of exhausted, enfeebled old age surviving itself, was not cheerful. The faded beauty of Alicia, on whose features sat a fearful loveliness, boding rapid decay, was another sad sight. But, I confess, I felt most shocked at the alteration in Lucy: not a vestige of her former sprightliness, nothing in her manner to recall the wild romp who inspired every one with her own mirth. There is the same quickness in her motions; but the motive seems altogether different: her step has lost its elasticity; there is no spring of youth about her. No; it is impossible you can ever represent to yourself that round dimpled face, decked in perpetual smiles, what it now is, drawn, colourless, dead to joy!"

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Extract from a second letter, written several weeks afterwards.

[From the same to the same.]

———Han dritto in Cielo
Le suppliche dolenti
D'un anima fedel.
* * * * * *

METASTASIO.

"I was yesterday aroused, for the first time, from the stupor of grief which so unforeseen a calamity had produced, by the intelligence that the beautiful Alicia was at peace! I had shrunk from the sight of every living being, save the kind Vicar; but to the house of mourning I gladly bent my steps. I stopped at the slight fence that protects the garden, to consider whether it would not be an intrusion. I gazed on the abode of sorrow, till I lent to every surrounding object the feelings that overpowered me.

"Every thing spoke of heaviness and gloom; not a leaf stirred in the thick air; there was no life in any thing; Nature mourned over man in the silent sympathy of deep repose. Suddenly, a childish voice broke the oppressive stillness; it was the accent of lamentation and alarm, and I hesitated no longer. I entered, and beheld the tears of age and childhood: from the sightless parent I could gain no information; the child pointed to an adjoining room, and her dismay was explained —Lucy had fainted over the unclosed coffin of her sister. With regret I administered the necessary assistance: it was barbarous to recall her to such a life! On her recovery, she appeared so calm and so collected, she exerted herself so much to soothe her mother, and pacify their youthful attendant, that I perceived she had yielded rather to bodily than mental weakness. I could

not comprehend a fortitude so mingled with agony. I dared not give another look at the dead—the scene was yet too fresh in my heart, and the form of my lost Maria seemed to fill every coffin.

"I left the cottage, and my departure was as unnoticed as had been my entrance. I repaired to that grave where, hitherto, I have wept unseen; they were breaking up the earth near it: they replied to my question, "It is a grave for Mrs. Neville's eldest daughter—the old lady will soon follow her; it's a wonder, however, she could have lasted so long." I turned away in sickening horror. How dare we thus limit the span of life to another! I met the good clergyman; he was seeking me, to prevent my visit to the church-yard. I told him what I had seen. The mention of the Neville's brought tears to his eyes.

"'Poor thing! she suffered much—but it was a peaceful death—she had seen it so long approach! Who could have foretold, when Alicia was born in the lap of luxury and rejoicing, that she would have breathed her last in absolute poverty and want?'

"'But her husband! could not he supply her with what she might require?'

"'The protracted illness of Mrs. De Lancy was found so heavy a charge on the slender means of her family, that at last, Miss Neville, although with a degree of repugnance that surprised me, followed my advice of applying to Mr. De Lancy for pecuniary assistance. What he sent was accompanied by a letter so *more* than ungracious, that Lucy's weakened nerves could not stand the shock, and Alicia was thus suffered to see a letter, the barbarity of which might well have shocked a stronger mind. In the first emotion of indignation she insisted on the money being returned; the comforts she said, which it might purchase for her, would give her no relief, when she thought how they had been procured; in short, she would have nothing extorted but the expenses of her funeral, which her husband would doubtless pay with alacrity, since they would

be the last for her. This answer was sent before I knew of it, or I should have used my influence to prevent it. She has had no other attendant than her sister, who, with her own hands, arrayed the corpse, and laid it in the coffin. When I witness the misery and the resolution of Lucy Neville, I wonder at the strength of the human heart, which bears so much without breaking! Mrs. Neville cannot long survive, and with her perishes nearly all the means of subsistence which remain to her unfortunate daughter.' "

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[From the same to the same.]

H. M. S. N——, off Torbay.

"The wind still detains me here. I went ashore two days since, and learned the day was fixed for Mr. De Lancy's marriage! And this man, they say, loved his wife! parted from her with regret; and the grass has not yet grown upon her grave! I am told her drawings are to be sold by subscription; they were very beautiful.

"Before I had determined to go abroad, I followed Alicia's funeral. Twice, in the course of one fortnight, had I listened to those awful words—had I beheld the young and the lovely sink into the cold bosom of the earth! I ought not to mourn my beloved wife—she was happy, and died as one who sleeps. The griefs, whatever they were, that brought the once peerless and adored Alicia to an untimely grave are felt no more; we should then rejoice, yet,

"'So short a space the light of heaven to view!
So short a space, and fill'd with sorrow too!'

"It is a melancholy reflection, but what is there that is not melancholy in this vale of tears?" * * * *

THE END.

[illegible]

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